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ABSTRACT

This report presents a second look at the effects of Minnesota's School District Enrollment Options Program, usually referred to as the Open Enrollment Program. This interdistrict enrollment program allows families and students to apply for enrollment in any school district other than the one in which they reside. This document focuses on the Minnesota school districts that experienced the greatest amount of student movement as a result of the Open Enrollment Program in 1990-91. It attempts to assess the validity of the supply-and-demand argument that holds that where there is choice, schools and districts will change and/or improve programming to meet consumers' demands. Administrators from a total of 84 districts participated in a telephone survey. These districts were then classified as high-impact gainers, high-impact losers, or low-impact districts. In conclusion, findings were mixed regarding the validity of the supply-and-demand theory of educational choice. Some evidence suggested that open enrollment motivated administrators of districts that lost students to try to improve their school programs; however, other evidence indicated that open enrollment was not the causative factor in program improvement. Further, in some districts where open enrollment should have, in theory, stimulated improvement, it forced actions such as staff layoffs and the cancellation of programs or services. A total of 25 exhibits are included. Appendices contain information on methodology, copies of district surveys, and sample letters to the sampled districts. (LMI)

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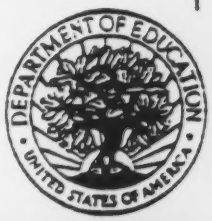

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MINNESOTA'S OPEN ENROLLMENT OPTION: IMPACTS ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Janie E. Funkhouser
Kelly W. Colopy

1994

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a second look at the effects of Minnesota's School District Enrollment Options Program (authorized in 1988 by Minnesota Statutes 120.062, 123.3515, 124A.036)--most commonly referred to as the Open Enrollment Program. This interdistrict enrollment program, only one of many choice options available in Minnesota, allows families and students to apply for enrollment in any school district other than the one in which they reside. A previous report (Rubenstein, Hamar, & Adelman, 1992) examined the implementation and early effects of the program using survey data collected from a census of Minnesota school districts, participating parents, and participating secondary school students during school year 1989-90.

The research effort reported on here focuses on the Minnesota school districts that experienced the greatest amount of student movement as a result of the Open Enrollment Program in 1990-91.[1] Throughout the report, we refer to this group as "high impact" districts, defined as those that either (1) gained or lost 50 or more students or (2) gained or lost 5 percent or more of their total enrollment. The second part of this definition ensured the inclusion of a substantial number of Minnesota's smallest rural districts where a gain or loss of 10 or 15 students may have a significant impact. For comparison purposes, we selected a set of districts where little movement had occurred as a result of the Open Enrollment Program in 1990-91; these districts were matched to a high impact district on the basis of (1) size of total enrollment and (2) geographic proximity.

Districts were initially selected based on the use of Open Enrollment in 1990-91, because it was the most current data available at the time of this survey. However, selected districts provided us with 1991-92 data in response to survey questions asking for numeric counts (e.g., of students or dollars). More general information (such as how they disseminate information or why they believe students use open enrollment) referred to the fall of 1992, when the interviews were conducted. Thus, our analyses are based on districts with at least two years of experience with Open Enrollment, and possibly up to five years of experience. And, although particular districts could have had a substantially different experience with Open Enrollment in 1991-92 than in 1990-91, the great majority of those in our sample, in fact, did not. Of those districts whose status changed and for which we have accurate data on the number of students entering and leaving in both years (nine), only one district changed from one high impact category to another (e.g., losing to gaining or gaining to

[1] This was the first year all school districts were required to allow students to attend school in another district. However, districts had been using the Open Enrollment Option on a voluntary basis since 1988-89, and districts with enrollments in excess of 1,000 were required to participate as of 1989-90.

losing). The other eight districts experienced more subtle changes (to or from low-impact status). These data should therefore be a fairly accurate reflection of the opinions and experiences of high impact gaining and losing districts over a minimum of two years.

The main hypothesis explored by this research is the validity of the supply and demand argument--one of several theories about the impact of educational choice. In theory, where there is choice, schools and school districts will change or improve their programming to meet the demands of consumers (parents and students). Districts that lose students will take steps to win them back. Districts that gain students presumably do so because of a reputation for high quality education, which they will strive to maintain or improve in order to hold their new students. Districts that have experienced little or no enrollment change because of Open Enrollment may have less incentive to change or improve. Alternatively, the educational improvement trends in low impact districts may be similar to those in the high impact districts, suggesting a need to look beyond Open Enrollment to other state or local school improvement policies or initiatives, or to the entire array of available choice options, for explanations of school change in Minnesota.

Research Questions

Both the report and this executive summary are organized around five research questions. Three of these provide a context for exploring the supply and demand theory as it applies to Minnesota's Open Enrollment program by identifying the types of districts experiencing the most student movement, the types of students in these districts who use Open Enrollment, and administrators' views on why parents and students decide to use Open Enrollment.

The last two research questions directly address the supply and demand theory regarding Open Enrollment's impact on school improvement. If the availability of school choice is a powerful market force, then we would expect schools to engage heavily in promoting both the existence of the option and the strengths of their own programs. Therefore, we included a question on information dissemination. The final research question explores the effects of Open Enrollment, as perceived by administrators, on selected indicators of the quality of school programs.

The research questions are:

(1) What are the characteristics of districts experiencing the most student movement due to the Open Enrollment program?

(2) What are the characteristics of students using the Open Enrollment program in high impact districts?

(3) What do high impact school district administrators believe are the reasons that parents and students decide to use the Open Enrollment program?

(4) How do high impact districts differ regarding the type and amount of information they disseminate about Open Enrollment and about their own programs?

(5) What programmatic outcomes or effects are associated with the Open Enrollment program in high impact districts?

Mixed Findings

Our findings are mixed regarding the validity of the supply and demand theory of educational choice. Specifically, the claim that Open Enrollment stimulates schools and school districts to change or improve their programming to meet the demands of consumers remains in question. Some evidence suggests that Open Enrollment motivates administrators of districts that lose students to strive to improve their school programs, but other evidence suggests that Open Enrollment is not the causative factor in program improvement, at least in the view of the administrators we surveyed. Further, in some districts where Open Enrollment should, in theory, stimulate improvement, it forced actions such as staff layoffs and the cancellation of programs or services. In a few cases, administrators said Open Enrollment caused or hastened the district's closing.

Evidence Suggesting Open Enrollment Does Change Schools

Some evidence suggests that Open Enrollment does have an impact on school programs, particularly in districts that have lost significant numbers or proportions of students through Open Enrollment. Further, districts located geographically close to those where significant student movement occurs (the comparison districts) are also likely to try to improve their schools, perhaps in response to their proximity to greater student movement between districts and the greater chance that they, too, could either gain or lose students.

For example, high impact districts (especially high impact losing districts) put more effort into disseminating information about Open Enrollment. Evidence includes their greater likelihood of targeting all families residing in their districts to receive this information, and use of a greater number of different dissemination strategies.

Losing and comparison districts disseminate information on a greater number of topics and more often include information on academic indicators. Also, both losing and comparison district administrators are much more likely than those in gaining districts to have taken steps specifically aimed at drawing students into a district or discouraging them from leaving. Many of the steps they report (such as expanding course offerings and increasing extracurricular activities) could directly affect academics and the learning climate in schools. Further, while relatively few district administrators in gaining or comparison districts reported that Open Enrollment led them to enter into cooperative arrangements with other districts (where districts or schools may pool resources to expand services and/or save money), superintendents in nearly half of the losing districts reported entering into such an arrangement specifically in response to Open Enrollment.

Finally, administrators in high impact districts generally believe academics play an important, if not primary, role in family decisions to use Open Enrollment. This is especially true at the secondary school level.

Evidence Suggesting Open Enrollment Does not Change Schools

Other evidence suggests that Open Enrollment may have little, if any, effect on school change. Comparisons of districts' total operating budgets (excluding capital expenditures) from 1989-90 to 1991-92 reveal that Open Enrollment has little overall effect on district finances. Additionally, there appears to be little effect on many educational outcomes, except in a very limited number of districts. When administrators in districts experiencing net gains and losses in enrollment due to Open Enrollment were asked whether the program affected specific academic and student support services in their schools, their responses suggest that most of the time Open Enrollment is not the main cause for any of the possible actions that we listed. Further, we asked administrators to document changes in specific educational indicators (e.g., teacher-student ratio, high school electives, advanced placement courses) occurring before and after implementation of Open Enrollment, and to identify the cause of change. In most cases, while administrators reported changes in several educational indicators over the last five years, our respondents pointed to factors other than Open Enrollment as causing change in these indicators (a finding consistent with previous research by Rubenstein et al.).

Open Enrollment May Hinder Those Districts It Should, in Theory, Improve

In districts experiencing net losses in enrollment due to Open Enrollment, over a quarter of administrators (26 percent) report that Open Enrollment caused them to lay off teachers and/or other staff. Other actions reported included the cancellation of academic courses (16 percent), school closings (8 percent), and the cancellation of extracurricular activities and student support services (5 percent). Effects of this kind are found primarily in very small rural districts. In some cases, the impact of lost enrollment may lead to or be offset by inter-district cooperative arrangements or district consolidations.

Should use of the Open Enrollment Program in Minnesota continue to increase as it has in recent years (Colopy & Tarr, 1994), its role as an agent of school change or improvement may become more conclusive. It is also possible, however, that should the use of several other Minnesota choice options also continue to grow (e.g., public charter schools, school board agreements, postsecondary enrollment options, high school graduation incentives [Colopy & Tarr, 1994]), distinctions between the effects of each type of option as compared to the effects of school choice in general may become clouded. Future research efforts may need to consider the entire array of choice options available and their combined effect on school change.

The remainder of this summary presents selected specific findings for each of the five research questions.

Question 1: What are the characteristics of districts experiencing the most student movement due to the Open Enrollment program?

Distributions of high impact districts (both gaining and losing) are roughly similar to that of all Minnesota school districts on most demographic measures, but key differences include the following:

- Districts with significant enrollment losses through Open Enrollment are clustered among the smallest and largest districts in the state.
- Because the losing districts include most of the state's largest and most urban districts, this group also has higher minority enrollments.
- Comparison districts (which were selected based on enrollment size and proximity to a high impact district) are less poor than either the high impact districts or the state's school districts overall.

- In comparison to districts that gained significant numbers or proportions of students through Open Enrollment, high impact losing districts have higher average total operating budgets. This may be because losing districts more often enroll the smallest numbers of students, where education becomes relatively more expensive per pupil.

- In comparison to districts that gained significant numbers or proportions of students, high-impact losing districts serve a more diverse student population.

Question 2: What are the characteristics of students using the Open Enrollment Program in high impact districts?

As has been the case throughout our three-year examination of educational choice options in Minnesota, the Twin Cities were not able to provide us with comparable and/or verifiable information on race/ethnicity and special needs of students using Open Enrollment for the years that we requested Excluding those in Minneapolis and St. Paul, the great majority of students using Open Enrollment to cross high impact district lines are white, mirroring the population in the state as a whole. On average, few students using Open Enrollment to enter a high impact district receive special services under federal categorical programs. Those students who do are most likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch and/or Chapter 1 services.

Question 3: What do high impact school district administrators believe are the reasons parents and students decide to use the Open Enrollment Program?

Administrators in high impact districts generally believe academics play an important, if not primary, role in family decisions to use Open Enrollment. When asked an open-ended question about the reasons families in their district use Open Enrollment, administrators in high impact districts reported that issues of proximity, which include closeness to home, parents' jobs, and day care, prevail. Academics and learning climate are the second and third freely offered reasons cited by administrators in high impact districts. If one reasons that the categories "academics" and "learning climate" together represent a broader variable related to academic learning, this reason would outweigh proximity issues in high impact districts. This would not be the case for comparison districts, suggesting that in districts experiencing the most movement under Open Enrollment, administrators may be more sensitive to the programmatic concerns of families.

When asked specific reasons about why students in their districts use Open Enrollment, administrators' responses are remarkably consistent across strata. They mention the same two reasons

most often: (1) a "better or different academic program," (mentioned by 100 percent of those in both gaining and losing districts and 75 percent of those in comparison districts) and (2) proximity of school to students' homes (mentioned by between 86 and 91 percent of administrators across all strata. While proximity was more important in comparison districts, academic program was the first most-often mentioned reason in high impact districts.

Administrator views of the primary reason motivating families to use Open Enrollment indicate that while proximity issues far outweigh academics at the elementary level, academics prevail for secondary students in high impact gaining districts (37 percent), and runs a close second (33 percent) to proximity (38 percent) in comparison districts. In losing districts, administrators were more likely to cite other nonacademic factors (e.g., fresh start, extracurricular offerings) as the primary reason that secondary level students used Open Enrollment.

Question 4: How do high impact districts differ regarding the type and amount of information they disseminate about Open Enrollment?

In comparison with earlier data reported by Rubenstein et. al., the current research suggests that districts have increased their efforts to disseminate information on Open Enrollment since 1989-90. Differences among gaining, losing, and comparison districts indicate that high impact--particularly losing--districts put more effort into dissemination than do comparison districts. These data suggest that dissemination approaches are expanding and that districts experiencing enrollment losses may be most aggressive in this area.

In addition, administrators in losing and comparison districts are much more likely than those in gaining districts to disseminate information on schools and programs in response to Open Enrollment. The topics covered are both greater in number and more often include information on academic indicators.

Question 5: What outcomes or effects are associated with the Open Enrollment Program in high impact districts?

School District Finances

Overall, the median change in total operating budgets suggests no striking differences between gaining and losing districts with regard to the overall effects of Open Enrollment on district budgets. Gaining districts did, however, experience much greater growth in the median general education

foundation aid[2] than losing districts. Although median figures are useful for looking at the big picture, they mask the range of districts' experiences resulting from student movement out of the district. Our interviews suggest that the very smallest and more geographically isolated districts suffer the most from the negative financial effects of student movement out of the district.

District Programming

Steps taken to draw students into a district or discourage them from leaving. Administrators in losing and comparison districts are much more likely to have taken steps specifically aimed at drawing students into a district or discouraging them from leaving than those in gaining districts. Many of the actions could directly affect academics and the learning climate in schools. Whereas 95 percent of administrators in the gaining districts indicated they had not taken such steps, those in well over a third (43 percent) of losing districts and over a quarter (29 percent) of comparison districts indicated they had taken steps such as:

- Expanding course offerings
- Making special transportation arrangements
- Making physical plant improvements
- Increasing extracurricular offerings

Effects on school districts experiencing net gains and losses in students. We asked district superintendents their views on whether student movement through Open Enrollment affected academic and student support services (such as changes in staffing and course offerings in their schools). Their responses suggest that, in most cases, Open Enrollment does not affect these factors (fewer than one-third of administrators responded that Open Enrollment caused them to take any of the actions that we listed). Nevertheless, for a small group of districts, Open Enrollment has allowed them either to hire staff and expand programming or forced them to lay off staff and cancel programs and services.

Effect on cooperative arrangements and interdistrict agreements. Our data suggest that Open Enrollment does not generally play a large part in decisions to enter cooperative arrangements or interdistrict agreements, but administrators in losing and comparison districts more often enter such arrangements in response to Open Enrollment than do those in gaining districts. For example,

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[2]General education foundation aid (GEFA) is the basic state aid that follows students as they transfer from one district to another.

administrators in 9 percent of gaining districts reported offering more courses through school cooperation in response to Open Enrollment, and administrators in 18 percent of losing and 27 percent of comparison districts reported this action. The same pattern is true regarding distance learning and traveling teachers. Further, when asked about any type of cooperative or tuition agreements or consolidation occurring during 1989-90 or later, nearly half (43 percent) of administrators in losing districts reporting these arrangements said that Open Enrollment played a major role in the decision.

Effects of open enrollment on selected educational indicators. With regard to programs at the district level, Rubenstein et. al. indicated that, early in the history of Open Enrollment (1989-90 school year), most responding districts viewed Open Enrollment as having no impact on variables that might be associated with school improvement or educational reform initiatives, even in districts that gained or lost the most students. However, of administrators who did see an effect, those seeing positive effects outnumbered those seeing negative effects by a large margin. Our conversations with administrators in a few high impact districts in 1990-91 also suggested few impacts on curriculum and instruction.

We explored this issue further in the 1992-93 survey of administrators in high impact and comparison districts. District administrators reported considerable change in selected education indicators (including student-teacher ratios and the numbers of high school electives, extracurricular activities, and advanced placement courses offered) over the last five years. However, the cause of the change in indicators is most often cited as factors other than Open Enrollment.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is one in a series that examines Minnesota's educational choice options. The first report on the School District Enrollment Options Program (Rubenstein, Hamar, & Adelman, 1992) (commonly referred to as the Open Enrollment Program) focused on early experiences with the program from the perspectives of families, students, and districts during the 1989-90 school year. That year was the first year in which it became mandatory for all school districts with enrollments over 1,000 to allow parents to transfer their children to other districts so long as the transfer did not have a negative impact on desegregation efforts.[1] The findings of the study were based on mail surveys of all the state's school districts and of families who submitted applications to have their children change districts beginning in September 1989. These data were later supplemented by interviews with eight small groups of minority parents (African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans) brought together by community leaders.

To complement analyses of school district survey responses, in 1990-91, study team members also contacted a small number of districts that had been most heavily affected by Open Enrollment transfers, defined as "high impact" districts. These districts had gained or lost 50 or more students or had gained or lost at least 5 percent of their student enrollment. Informal telephone interviews probed three areas of interest to state and federal policymakers: (1) who took advantage of the Open Enrollment option; (2) how families learned about Open Enrollment; and (3) the early effects of Open Enrollment on districts.

In the fall of 1992, at the recommendation of the study's panel of expert consultants, the study team designed and conducted formal telephone interviews with administrators in three groups of districts:

(1) All districts gaining 50 or more students or with an increase in enrollment of 5 percent or more in 1990-91 as a direct result of the Open Enrollment program ("gaining" districts)

(2) All districts losing 50 or more students or with a decrease in enrollment of 5 percent or more in 1990-91 as a direct result of the Open Enrollment program ("losing" districts)

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[1] During 1987-88 and 1988-89, all districts had the option of letting students apply to transfer to other districts under Open Enrollment, but very few districts elected to do so. 1990-91 was the first year in which all districts, regardless of size, were required to allow students to transfer out.

(3) A sample of districts experiencing little or no movement ("low impact") due to Open Enrollment to serve as a comparison group

High impact districts were identified using data sets provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.[2]

On the advice of the study's panel of experts, we selected low impact districts based on two criteria: (1) proximity to a high impact district (not more than three district lines away) and (2) enrollment roughly comparable to a nearby high impact district (falling within standard enrollment ranges used by the National Center for Education Statistics to report school district data--e.g., 1 to 299, 300 to 599, etc.). About half of the comparison districts were matched to high impact gaining districts on geographic proximity and enrollment, and half to high impact losing districts.

Districts were initially selected based on the use of Open Enrollment in 1990-91, because it was the most current data available at the time of this survey. However, selected districts provided us with 1991-92 data in response to most survey questions. Thus, our analyses are based on districts with at least two years of experience with Open Enrollment and possibly up to five years of experience. (However, participation in Open Enrollment was not mandatory for all districts until 1990-91.)

Scope of This Report

This report provides information on the activities engaged in and effects experienced by Minnesota school districts that underwent the most student movement due to Open Enrollment as of the 1990-91 school year. We compare high impact "gaining" districts with "losing" districts, and we also compare high impact gaining and losing districts with a sample experiencing little or no movement due to the Open Enrollment Program.

The main hypothesis explored by this research is the validity of the supply and demand argument--one of several theories about the impact of educational choice in general. In theory, where there is choice, schools and school districts will improve their programming to meet the demands of consumers (parents and students). Districts that lose students will take steps to win them back. Districts that gain students presumably do so because of a reputation for high quality education, which

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[2] Eight districts that both gained and lost 50 students were classified according to their net gain or loss. (For a detailed discussion, see p. A-3.)

they will strive to maintain or improve in order to hold their new students. Districts that have experienced little or no enrollment change because of Open Enrollment may have less incentive to change or improve. Alternatively, the educational improvement in low impact districts may be similar to that in the high impact districts, suggesting a need to look beyond Open Enrollment (to other state or local school improvement policies or initiatives, or to the entire array of available choice options) for explanations of school change in Minnesota.

We emphasize that the results reported here represent only the districts sampled--districts experiencing more than the average amount of student movement as a result of Open Enrollment--rather than Minnesota school districts as a whole. In addition, findings, viewpoints, or opinions presented are derived from interviews with school administrators; interviews with parents or students using the option might produce different results. When appropriate, we draw comparisons between our findings and those reported in the earlier study which solicited data from all suburban and rural Minnesota school districts during the 1989-90 school year (Rubenstein et al., 1992).

Finally, we emphasize that our findings on outcomes or effects associated with the Open Enrollment option in high impact districts should be considered suggestive, due in large part to the fact that students in Minnesota can and do cross district lines through several other mechanisms in addition to Open Enrollment. Specifically, when asked whether students use other mechanisms to enter the district[3] throughout the year, administrators in 95 percent of gaining districts, 90 percent of losing districts, 93 percent of comparison districts responded that this is the case. While we do not have comparable figures for students leaving the district, we can assume that, in many cases, movement occurs in both directions.

The remainder of this report focuses on five research questions about Minnesota districts experiencing the most student movement due to the Open Enrollment program:

(1) What are the characteristics of districts experiencing the most student movement due to the Open Enrollment program?

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[3] Although several districts were unable to provide us with precise numbers for the 1991-92 school year, very few responding administrators in all strata reported that no students entered through other mechanisms that particular year. In high impact districts, respondents most often estimated that 19 or fewer students entered through other mechanisms in 1991-92 (47 percent of gaining and 40 percent of losing districts). However, comparison districts more often had higher numbers of students entering through other mechanisms, and about a third of responding administrators reported that more than 100 students entered their district by other means in 1991-92.

(2) What are the characteristics of students using the Open Enrollment option in high impact districts?

(3) What do high impact school district administrators believe are the reasons that cause parents and students to use the Open Enrollment option?

(4) How do high impact districts differ regarding the type and amount of information they disseminate about Open Enrollment and about their own programs?

(5) What programmatic outcomes or effects are associated with the Open Enrollment option in high impact districts?

Question 1: What Are the Characteristics of Districts Experiencing the Most Student Movement due to the Open Enrollment Program?

Exhibits 1-A and 1-B compare gaining and losing and comparison districts with all Minnesota districts on a number of characteristics. We also compare high and low impact districts on these variables. The characteristics include 1991-92 total enrollment, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, urbanicity, and the percentage of minority enrollment. In addition, Exhibit 2 presents budgetary characteristics of high impact and comparison districts, including the median total school district operating budget (revenues), and the median total operating budget per student enrolled. Below we elaborate on each characteristic.

Total Enrollment

Most school districts in Minnesota were small in 1990-91. Nearly half (40 percent) of all districts in Minnesota enrolled 500 or fewer students, and another 24 percent enrolled 500 to just under 1,000 students. Only 7 percent of districts enrolled 5,000 or more students. Exhibit 1-A shows that losing districts more often include both the largest and the smallest districts. Gaining districts also have larger school enrollments than districts statewide. This tendency for high impact districts to have higher enrollments possibly reflects the fact that families living in larger urban and suburban districts have more choices of schools within a reasonable distance of their homes, as well as more transportation options. Further, the few urban areas in the state are all losing districts by the definition employed in this study.

Comparisons across groups suggest that families find drawbacks to attending school in both the smallest and largest districts. More than half of the districts in all three deliberately-selected strata have total enrollments of fewer than 1,000, and losing districts are notably more likely to enroll fewer than 500 students. Many more gaining districts fall in the mid-range of student enrollments (1,000 to 2,400 students) than either losing or comparison districts. In addition, nearly one-third of the losing districts enroll 10,000 or more students, but none of the gaining districts and only one comparison district has a large student enrollment. These data indicate that very small districts, possibly due to their greater likelihood of financial struggles to maintain and improve programs, more often lose students through Open Enrollment to surrounding districts.

Exhibit 1A
Total Enrollments of School Districts
by District Size
(1991-92)

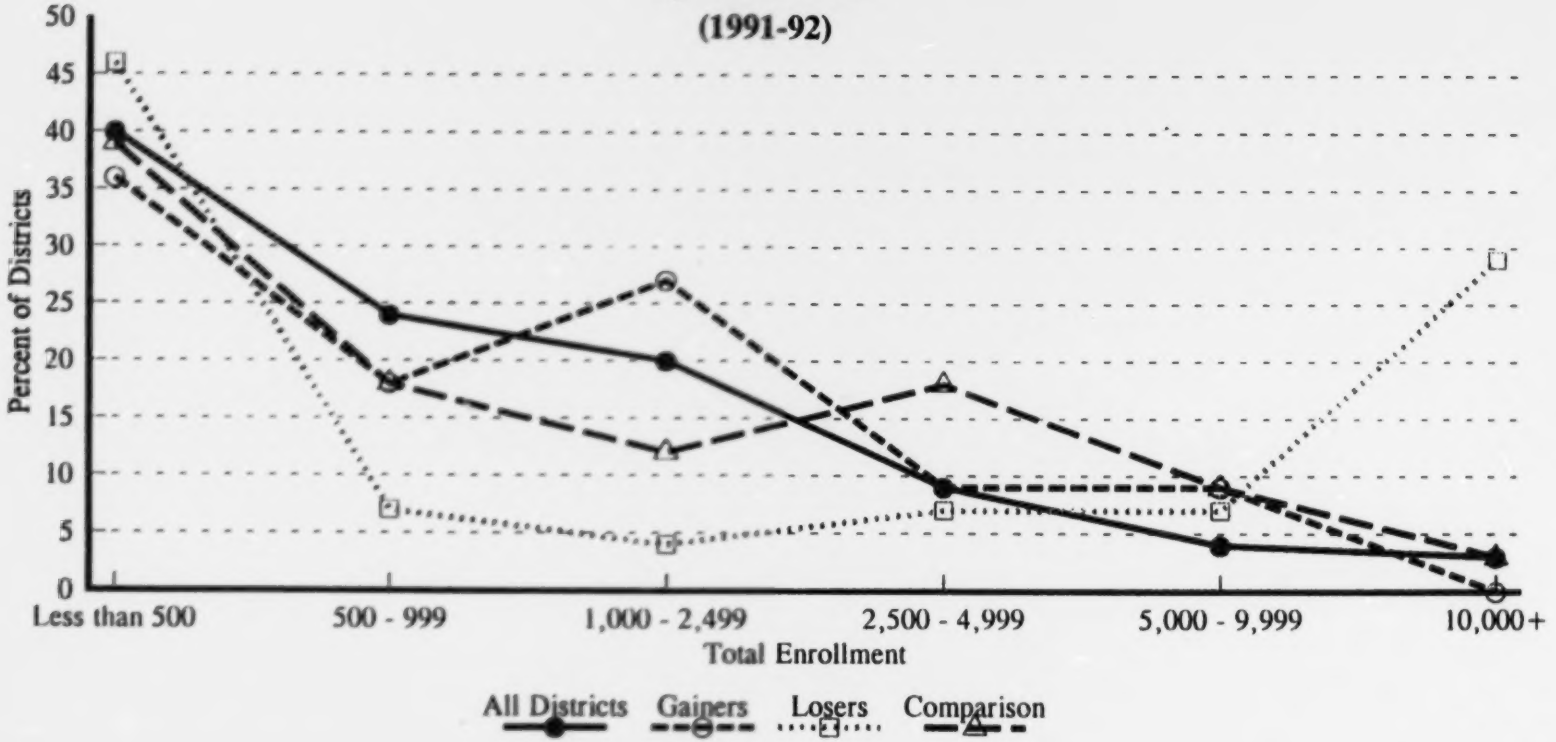

Exhibit reads: Forty percent of Minnesota school districts and 46 percent of losing districts have a total enrollment of less than 500 students.

Exhibit 1B
Other Demographic Characteristics of Districts in the Study (1991-92)

District Characteristics:	All Minnesota Districts (N=420)	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=33)
Percent Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch				
0%	1%	0%	7%	6%
1 - 10%	5	14	21	12
10 - 20%	20	27	14	30
20 - 30%	33	18	21	30
30% +	41	41	36	21
Urbanicity				
Urban*	1%	0%	11%	0%
Suburban	23	41	39	36
Rural	76	59	50	64
Percent Minority Enrollment				
< 1%	18%	5%	11%	24%
1 - 4.9%	56	64	39	49
5 - 9.9%	14	23	32	21
10% +	12	9	18	6

Exhibit reads: Three percent of all Minnesota school districts do not enroll any students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Note: *Data based on state information from 427 operating school districts for 1990-91.

Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-price Lunch

Statewide, only 1 percent of school districts did not enroll any students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in 1991-92 (Exhibit 1-B). In just over half of all districts (53 percent), between 10 and 30 percent of students were eligible for this program. Nearly half (41 percent) enrolled 30 percent or more eligible students. The high impact districts (both gainers and losers) are roughly similar to districts statewide. Forty-one percent of all districts, 41 percent of gaining, and 36 percent of losing districts enrolled 30 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced lunch. In contrast,

the comparison districts (which were not selected on the basis of relative student poverty) are somewhat less poor. Overall, the data suggest that this variable has little influence on whether districts gain or lose students.

Urbanicity

As is true in Minnesota generally, the majority of districts in all three strata are rural. However, high impact districts are far more likely to be suburban, probably for the same reason that they are larger: Students in suburban areas have more opportunity to transfer to other districts than students in rural, more isolated districts. Comparison districts are more suburban than the state overall because they were selected in part based on their proximity to a nearby high impact district. Urban areas (there are few in Minnesota) are present only in our sample of losing districts.

Percent Minority Enrollment

In the state as a whole, 77 percent of districts have minority enrollments of 5 percent or less, and only 9 percent of districts have a 10 percent or greater minority enrollment. Comparison districts in our sample follow this pattern closely (73 percent with a minority enrollment of 5 percent or less and 6 percent with a minority enrollment of 10 percent or greater.) The high impact districts, however, have somewhat higher minority enrollments--32 percent of gaining districts and 50 percent of losing districts have minority enrollments of more than 5 percent, compared with only 23 percent of districts in all of Minnesota. In addition, twice the proportion of losing districts (18 percent) have minority enrollments of 10 percent or higher when compared with all districts (9 percent). Among the high impact districts, losing districts generally have higher minority enrollments.

The data suggest a tendency for greater use of Open Enrollment in districts with higher proportions of minority enrollment. One third to one half of high impact districts have minority enrollments greater than 5 percent in comparison with about one-fourth of all Minnesota districts or the comparison group. However, Exhibit 1 does not indicate which students in the high impact group use Open Enrollment. That question is addressed in a subsequent section of this report.

Median Budget Figures

Exhibit 2 presents 1991-92 median budget line items for the high impact and comparison group districts. Included are the total operating budget (excluding capital expenditures), special education funds, transportation funds, state general education foundation aid (GEFA), and capital expenditures. We also computed the median operating budget per student. Districts in all three groups spend roughly the same median amount of their operating budgets per student, differing by no more than 9 percent. The most notable differences among districts are with regard to the total operating budget and capital expenditures, where losing districts report much larger median figures and slightly higher per pupil expenditures. This suggests that families do not select districts based on a district's financial status.

Overall, budget figures for districts in the gaining and comparison districts are roughly comparable with regard to most budget categories. With the exception of more GEFA in comparison districts (by about $141,000--or a difference of 18 percent--a reflection of the fact that comparison districts more often have somewhat larger enrollments and thus more basic state aid), other categories reflect differences of no more than 11 percent. When comparing budgets of the losing districts with other districts, special education, transportation and GEFA funds differ by no more than 20 percent. The differences between losing and gaining districts are only between 10 and 15 percent in these categories.

However, the total operating budget in losing districts in 1991-92 was 49 percent higher than those in comparison districts and 38 percent higher than those in gaining districts. A good deal of this difference is attributable to capital expenditures. The capital expenditures budget in losing districts was 58 percent higher than those in comparison and 55 percent higher than those in gaining districts.

The tendency of losing districts to budget more in these categories could reflect the fact that losing districts are notably more likely to have smaller total enrollments (less than 500) than other districts. With regard to very small districts, the lack of "economy of scale" may account for higher expenses in some areas. In fact, analysis within the losing district category reveals that the five highest spenders have enrollments of between 76 and 150 students. The lowest spenders among the losing districts include two of the largest districts in the sample, with enrollments of roughly 22,000 and 35,000.

Exhibit 2
Median Budgets for Districts in the Study
(1991-92)

Median Budget Line Items	Percent of Districts: Gaining[a]	Losing[b]	Comparison[c]
Total Operating Budget (1991-92)	$3,900,000	$6,269,264	$3,185,728
Special Education Funds	337,562	291,166	322,707
Transportation Funds	306,655	318,865	272,249
GEFA	1,651,642	2,068,984	1,792,885
Capital Expenditures	197,000	496,218	210,845
Median Total Operating Budget per Student	$5,266	$5,818	$5,598

Exhibit reads: The median 1991-92 total operating budget in high impact gaining districts was $3.9 million dollars. The median total operating budget per student enrolled was $5,266.00.

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[a] Due to missing data, the N for gaining districts is 19 for median budget line items and 18 for median total operating budget per student.

[b] Due to missing data, the N for losing districts is 24 for median budget line items and 26 for median total operating budget per student.

[c] Due to missing data, the N for comparison districts is 31 for median budget line items and 28 for median total operating budget per student.

Question 2: What Are the Characteristics of Students Using the Open Enrollment Program in High Impact Districts?

Exhibits 3 and 4 present the race/ethnicity and special needs status of students using the Open Enrollment option in suburban and rural high impact districts in 1991-92.[4] The great majority of students using Open Enrollment in suburban and rural high impact districts are white, mirroring the population in the state as a whole. Further, on average, few students using Open Enrollment to enter a high impact district receive special services under federal categorical programs. Those who do are most likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch, and to a lesser extent, Chapter 1 services. Below we elaborate.

Race/Ethnicity

Minnesota's school population has traditionally been predominantly white, with most of the minority population situated in the Twin Cities areas. In an earlier report on the Open Enrollment program, Rubenstein et al. found that, excluding Minneapolis and St. Paul, 94 percent of Open Enrollment participants were white (not of Hispanic origin). Information on Open Enrollment participants in high impact districts verifies this finding. Although several districts in our sample were unable (due to record keeping practices) or unwilling to provide this information, on average, 90 percent of Open Enrollment students in gaining districts and 95 percent of those in losing districts were white.

Our data suggest a very slight tendency for more minority movement in high impact gaining districts than in losing districts. However, the numbers of minority students involved are small and may be due to unusual circumstances. For example, in one instance a very small district located close to an American Indian reservation gained 14 Native American students at once--100 percent of those transferring in under Open Enrollment that year. Students could attend school on the Indian Reservation through grade six, after which they had to transfer elsewhere. Prior to Open Enrollment, seventh-grade students used some other authorized mechanism to transfer.

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[4] The Twin Cities were unable to provide us with comparable and/or verifiable information on race/ethnicity and special needs of students using Open Enrollment for the years that we requested.

Exhibit 3
Mean Percent of Students Using Open Enrollment to Transfer in or out of High Impact Districts, by Race/Ethnicity (1991-92)

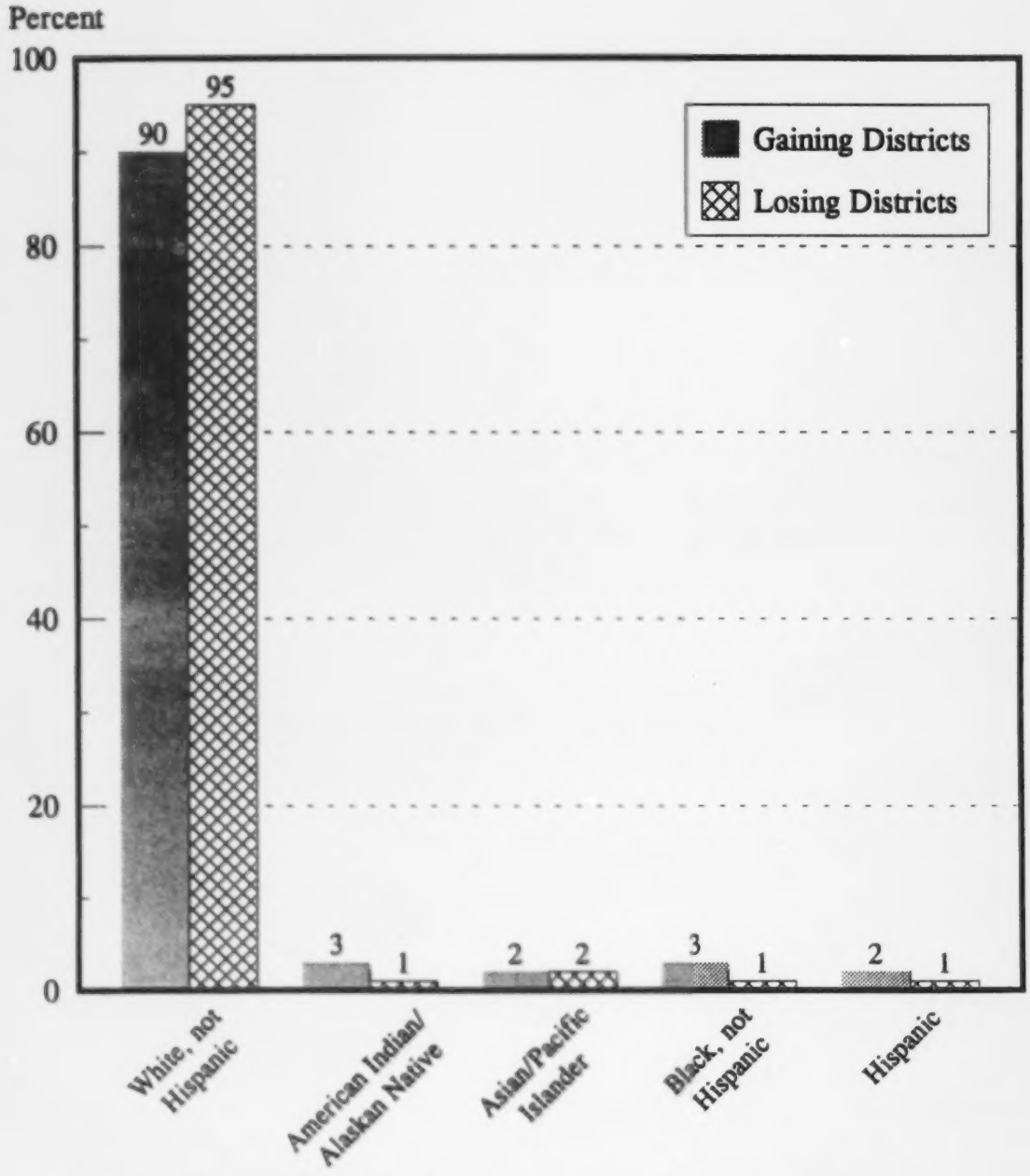

Exhibit reads: On average, 90 percent of the students using Open Enrollment to transfer in or out of high impact gaining districts are white, and not of Hispanic origin.

Note: Non-respondents include Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Special Needs Program Participation

Rubenstein et al. (1992) indicated that the number of Chapter 1 students, handicapped students or students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch who crossed district lines was small in 1989-90. Between 90 and 99 percent of reporting districts indicated that fewer than 10 transfer students were eligible for each federal program (Rubenstein et al., p. 49). In general, data from high impact districts replicate these findings, although gaining districts appear likely to attract larger numbers of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and Chapter 1. This is consistent with the fact that high impact gaining districts have a larger percentage of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (See exhibit 1). Exhibit 4 presents the percentage of high impact districts with entering nonresident students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, Chapter 1, handicapped education (IDEA--Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and Title VII (Bilingual Education) services in 1991-92.

Exhibit 4 shows that most students who use Open Enrollment do not receive special federal program services. With the exception of the free or reduced-price lunch program, between 83 and 100 percent of district administrators across both strata report that fewer than 10 students eligible for federal categorical programs entered their district through Open Enrollment in 1991-92. (Note that, in this exhibit, data are for students entering districts--including those districts identified as high impact losing districts.) Expressed as the median of the total number of students transferring under Open Enrollment, these students represent on average no more than 8 percent. The figure is comparable to the findings of another federally-funded study specifically examining the use of the Minnesota Open Enrollment Option by students with disabilities (Lange, 1993).

Exhibit 4
High Impact Districts with Entering Nonresident Students Receiving Services under Federal Categorical Programs (1991-92)

	Percent of Districts with Number Ranges of Entering Students Receiving Special Services:			
Number of Students:	0	1-9	10-29	30-99
Gaining Districts[a]				
Free/reduced lunch	18%	24%	47%	12%
Chapter 1 (CH 1)	24	59	18	0
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	68	26	5	0
Title VII (Bilingual)	95	5	0	0
Losing Districts[b]				
Free/reduced lunch	25%	63%	13%	0%
CH 1	50	50	0	0
IDEA	69	31	0	0
Bilingual	94	6	0	0

Exhibit reads: Among high impact gaining districts 18 percent had no students entering under Open Enrollment in 1991-92 who were receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

Note: Row percents do not add to 100 due to rounding. Non-respondents include Minneapolis and St. Paul.

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[a] Due to missing data, the N for gaining districts varies from 17 to 19 for specific categorical programs.

[b] Due to missing data, the N for losing districts is 16.

Question 3: What Do High Impact School District Administrators Believe Are the Reasons Parents and Students Decide to Use the Open Enrollment Program?

Some proponents of Open Enrollment argue that allowing parents to choose their children's school will foster competition among schools; if substantial numbers of parents seek to enroll their students in schools with the best academic reputations, poorer performing schools will be forced to try to improve their programs. Skeptics argue that when families make educational choices, a school's academic reputation is not nearly so important as other factors--for example, location of a school in relation to a home, a parent's job, or daycare arrangements.

Rubenstein et al. (1992) addressed this issue through their survey of all Minnesota districts and found that, when asked to identify the single most important reason for selecting a particular school, parents identified the school's academic reputation. Proximity to the home and to educational services tied for second, and the learning climate was fourth (p. 29). Both white and minority families cited the same three reasons most often: learning climate, educational services, and academic reputation (p. 29). Proximity to home was notably more important to parents in suburban and rural areas. Suburban parents and low-income parents in all types of communities cited proximity to home as the most important factor in their decision (p. 3). Similarly, when secondary students were asked why they wanted to change schools using the Open Enrollment option, the four most popular reasons were academic in nature:

- To leave a school they did not like (nearly 60 percent indicated the classes were not interesting or challenging)
- To take courses not available at their old school
- To get teachers interested in them
- To take courses better matched to their abilities

Our survey of administrators in high impact districts in the fall of 1992 posed both open- and closed-ended questions about why students used Open Enrollment. We first let administrators respond freely in an open-ended format about why they think students use Open Enrollment. We then used specific prompts to make sure that they had included all the reasons that applied to students in their districts. Finally, we asked for a "primary reason" that students used Open Enrollment to either enter or leave a district, allowing respondents to offer different primary reasons for elementary and secondary level students as appropriate. Below we present responses to the different questions posed, and then attempt to tie them together.

Most Common Reasons for Using Open Enrollment - Open-ended Responses

As Exhibit 5 indicates, when asked an open-ended question in the fall of 1992 about why students in their district use Open Enrollment to transfer across district lines, administrators most often cited proximity issues: to attend a school closer to home, a parent's job or daycare, or a similar reason of geographic convenience. Across all three strata, administrators mentioned this reason far more often than the next most prevalent reasons. Academics (stronger or different academic program) and learning climate (smaller classes, more extracurricular offerings, tighter or different discipline policy, and district or school size) were cited by between 32 percent and 46 percent of administrators.

However, if one considers that the categories "academics" and "learning climate" together represent a broader variable related to a school's instructional programming, this reason would outweigh proximity issues in high impact districts, although not in comparison districts. This would suggest that in districts experiencing the most movement under Open Enrollment, administrators believe that programmatic reasons figure at least as prominently as convenience when families use the Open Enrollment program.

Unprompted, administrators also mentioned reasons such as families moving away but wanting a student to remain in the original school. This reason was mentioned more often than academics by administrators in comparison districts (38 versus 32 percent).

Athletics appear to play a relatively small role in the decision to transfer, at least in the view of administrators. Although athletic recruitment is specifically prohibited under Open Enrollment and transferring students must wait a year before participating in intermural sports, some had feared that Open Enrollment would tempt schools to recruit students. Athletics was most often mentioned by administrators in losing districts (19 percent). Several respondents across all strata noted, as an aside, that it was more often an increased opportunity to participate in team sports (usually in smaller districts) that attracted students as opposed to more or less successful or different athletic teams.

Exhibit 5

School District Administrators' Views on Reasons for Transferring to Another District Using Open Enrollment: Open-Ended Responses (Fall 1992)

Reasons	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=27)	Comparison (N=34)
Proximity issues (closer to home, parents' job, daycare, geographic convenience in general)	86%	63%	79%
Academics (stronger or different academic program)	46	41	32
Learning climate (smaller classes, more extracurricular offerings, tighter or different discipline policy, district/school size)	46	41	35
Students already there (family moved and children remained at old school)	27	22	38
Athletics	9	19	15
Other	46	52	29

Exhibit reads: District administrators in 86 percent of all high impact gaining districts reported that students use Open Enrollment to transfer across district lines due to the proximity of a school to home, parents' job, daycare, or due to geographic convenience in general.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Finally, administrators in all strata often cited a number of other reasons for the use of Open Enrollment. "Other" was mentioned by as many as or more administrators in high impact districts as were academics or learning climate. While no single reason accounted for a substantial portion of this category, it included factors such as:

- Families prefer this community to where they live

- Tradition--parents attended here and want their children to
- Fresh start
- Resident district closed a school
- Friends attend the school/different social climate
- Political reasons (e.g., lack of public support for schools in the resident district; to be part of a pairing agreement with another district; to avoid a consolidation, etc.)

This suggests that although administrators view issues of proximity, academics, and learning climate as predominating, they are aware of a wide variety of circumstances that cause families to use Open Enrollment.

Most Common Reasons for Using Open Enrollment--Specific Prompts

Exhibit 6 presents administrators' responses to a list of specific prompts regarding why students used Open Enrollment to enter or leave their district during 1991-92. In general, administrators' responses are remarkably consistent regarding most reasons across all strata. They mention the same two reasons most often: (1) a "better or different academic program," (mentioned by 100 percent of those in both gaining and losing districts and 75 percent of those in comparison districts) and (2) proximity of school to students' homes (mentioned by between 86 and 91 percent of administrators across all strata). However, while proximity was seen as most important in comparison districts, the academic program was the first and most-often mentioned reason in high impact districts. Smaller schools or classes and childcare issues follow as the third and fourth most common reasons. More or different extracurricular activities were mentioned by roughly half of administrators.

A few differences in administrators' responses to specific prompts are noteworthy. Those in gaining districts more often reported enrolling students as a result of school closings (45 percent) in comparison with those in losing (14 percent) or comparison (16 percent) districts. Roughly 45 percent of administrators in both types of high impact districts reported that better or newer facilities cause students to use Open Enrollment. This contrasts with 25 percent of administrators in comparison districts. Finally, administrators in losing districts are much more likely than other administrators to report that crowded schools (30 percent) and "a lack of public support" (15 percent) prompt movement.

Exhibit 6

School District Administrators' Views on Reasons for Transferring to Another District Using Open Enrollment: Specific Prompts (Fall 1992)

Reasons	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=18)	Losing (N=22)	Comparison (N=28)
Better/different academic program	100	100	75
Schools located nearer to students' homes	89	91	86
Smaller schools or classes	78	77	71
Childcare/improved childcare	56	64	54
School closing	45	14	16
Better/newer facilities	44	46	25
More/different extracurricular activities	44	50	46
Transportation offered by receiving district	39	32	29
Other	28	27	21
Overcrowded schools	6	30	0
Districts suffers lack of public support	0	15	0

Exhibit reads: District administrators in 100 percent of high impact gaining districts reported that one reason students use Open Enrollment to enter and/or leave their district is for a better or different academic program.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Primary Reason for the Use of Open Enrollment

Exhibits 7 and 8 present school district administrators' views on the primary reason motivating families to use Open Enrollment to enter or leave their districts, distinguishing between elementary and secondary students. At the elementary level, issues of proximity clearly predominate across all strata. While academics is the second most often cited response, at best it lags more than 40 percentage points behind proximity.

Exhibit 7
School District Administrators' Views on the Primary Reason Families Use Open Enrollment for Elementary Students (Fall 1992)

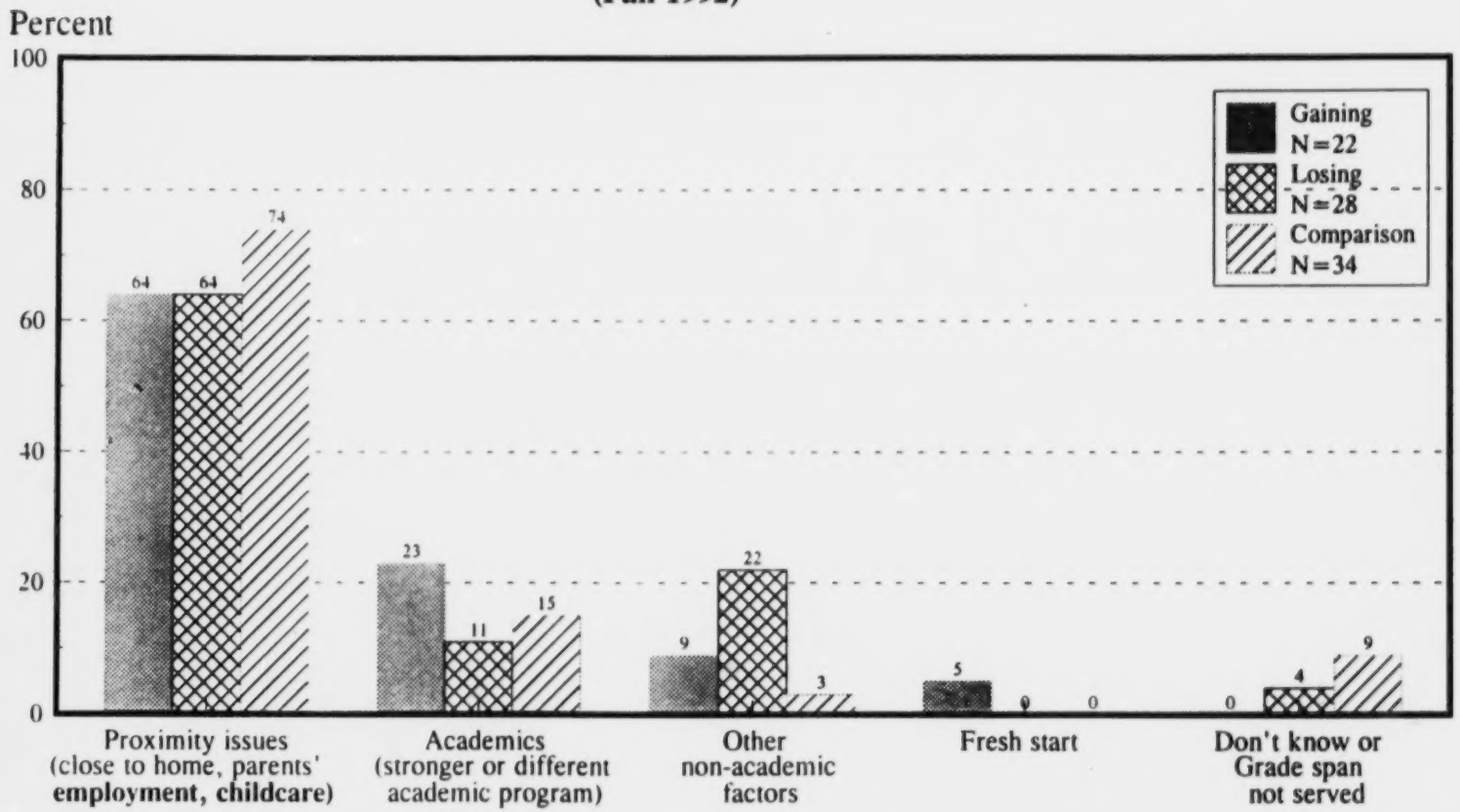

Exhibit reads: Sixty-four percent of district administrators in high impact gaining districts reported that the primary reason motivating families to use the open enrollment option at the elementary level is the proximity of school to home, childcare, or parent's work place.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit 8
School District Administrators' Views on the Primary Reason Families Use Open Enrollment for Secondary Students (Fall 1992)

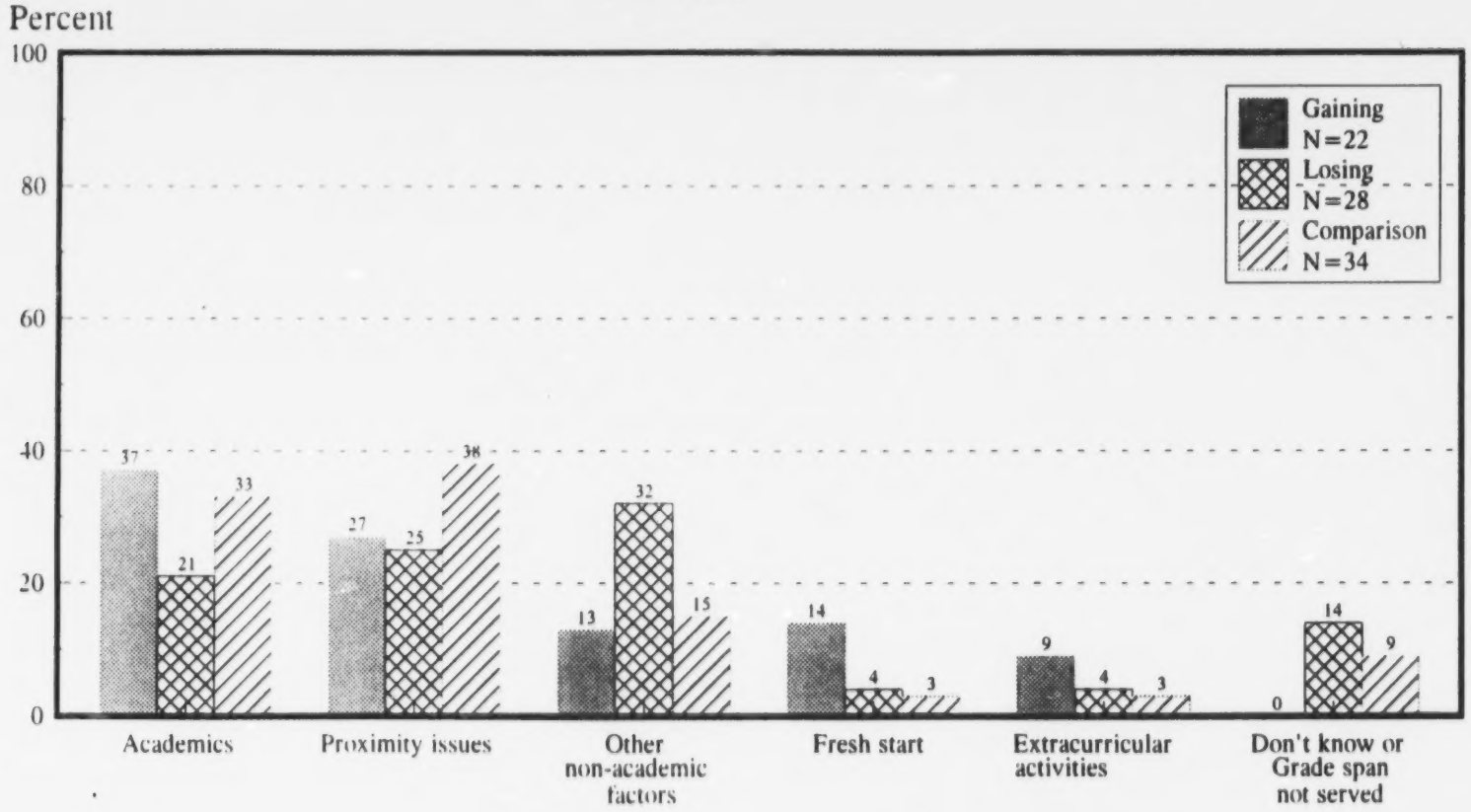

Exhibit reads: Thirty-seven percent of district administrators in high impact gaining districts reported that the primary reason motivating families to use the open enrollment option at the secondary level is the proximity of school to home, childcare, or parent's work place.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding.

For secondary students, administrators viewed academics as the primary reason (37 percent) in high impact gaining districts only, although in comparison districts, academics is a close second (33 percent versus 38 percent for proximity). In losing districts, "other non-academic factors" (excluding proximity, fresh start, and extracurricular activities) prevailed, and academics came in third (21 percent).

The fact that administrators in high impact gaining districts more often cited academics as the primary motivating factor could mean that secondary students flock to districts with stronger academic programs. One must also consider, however, that districts benefiting from Open Enrollment (or at least not hurt by it) may be more likely to view their success as due to a strong academic program, but districts faring less well may look to reasons beyond their academic programs. In addition, one must bear in mind that these data represent the views of school administrators, and they may differ from the actual reasons that might be cited by parents and students.

Finally, administrators in comparison districts are almost as likely as those in gaining districts to view academics as the primary reason motivating secondary students to transfer (33 versus 37 percent, respectively). The fact that comparison districts experience some movement due to Open Enrollment and are located geographically close to districts that experience substantial movement (and may thus be aware of reasons for student movement in the area) may add some validity to the views of administrators who said academics are a primary motivating factor for secondary student transfers.

Taken together, these data suggest that proximity and academic program are both prevalent reasons why students use Open Enrollment to cross district lines. Which of these is most common depends on whom you ask and how the question is posed. It is unclear, for example, whether those who respond to an open-ended question mention the most common reason first or the reason that annoys or pleases them the most. In addition, our data suggest that the primary reason for use of the option depends on whether the students concerned are elementary or secondary students, and that while convenience factors are more important for younger students, academics may become more important at the secondary level.

Question 4: How Do High Impact Districts Differ regarding the Type and Amount of Information They Disseminate about Open Enrollment and about Their Own Programs?

Dissemination of information about the Open Enrollment option is of interest for two reasons. First, families need a reasonable opportunity to become aware of their school choice options. Second, in a supply-and-demand market, one would expect attention to advertising to take on increased importance.

Although specific dissemination strategies are a local prerogative, Minnesota state statute requires school districts to make information on Open Enrollment available to all resident families. However, districts are prohibited from actively recruiting outside their boundaries. The Minnesota Department of Education provides districts with a model press release and printed descriptions of the Open Enrollment program, as well as of other enrollment options programs (e.g., the High School Graduation Incentives Program).

Some observers of school choice programs have expressed concern over whether adequate information about education options is made widely available to all families, and particularly whether the information reaches minority and poor families who may not come into regular contact with the schools. Discussions with groups of minority parents at an earlier point in this study suggested that these families were most likely to obtain information about schools and programs through an informal network of friends and family connections.

Dissemination Strategies

Exhibit 9 indicates that the great majority of districts in all three strata disseminate information on Open Enrollment through a variety of means. Not surprisingly, administrators most often cited a district newsletter, brochure, or flier. Also prevalent are local media--newspaper, radio, T.V. (about three-quarters of districts in all strata)--followed by school newsletters or newspapers (between 54 and 60 percent of districts in each strata). Over two-thirds of districts in all strata disseminate information on Open Enrollment during the months of September, October, and November--well in advance of the state's January 15 deadline for applications. August and December are the next most common distribution times.

Exhibit 9
School District Strategies for Disseminating Information on Open Enrollment (Fall 1992)

Dissemination Strategy	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=20)	Losing (N=24)	Comparison (N=34)
District newsletters, brochures, or fliers	85%	88%	74%
Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)	75	71	77
School newsletters or newspapers	60	54	59
Through real estate agents	40	42	15
Through some other mechanism	20	25	15
School-sponsored informational meetings	15	29	18
Video	10	0	3
Special districtwide mailing just on Open Enrollment	0	17	3

Exhibit reads: Of high impact gaining districts that reported making an effort to disseminate information on Open Enrollment, (20 districts) 85 percent use district newsletters, brochures, or fliers.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Comparison with data reported by Rubenstein et al. suggest that districts have increased their efforts to disseminate information on Open Enrollment since 1989-90, although not all response categories were comparable to the survey forms used for the current study. The earlier report found that only 12 percent of all districts used school-sponsored informational meetings to disseminate information. Exhibit 3 shows that between 5 and 29 percent of our districts did so in 1991-92. Rubenstein et al. also reported that only 10 percent of all districts used local media, but between 71 and 77 percent of all three groups of districts in the current study reported using this strategy. This large increase suggests that choice initiatives such as Open Enrollment do cause school districts to become more aggressive about marketing their programs.

Differences among gaining, losing, and comparison districts indicate that high impact--particularly losing--districts put more effort into dissemination than do comparison districts. For

example, districts in all three strata are about as likely to use district or school newsletters and local media, but high impact districts are more than twice as likely to distribute information through real estate agents as comparison districts (40 percent of gaining and 42 percent of losing districts versus only 15 percent of comparison districts). High impact districts also reported using other mechanisms more often (20 percent of gaining and 25 percent of losing districts versus only 15 percent of comparison districts). Losing districts are notably more likely to use school-sponsored informational meetings (29 percent) than either gaining (15 percent) or comparison (18 percent) districts, as well as to employ a special districtwide mailing just on Open Enrollment (17 percent of losing districts versus none of the gaining districts and only 3 percent of comparison districts). Overall, these data suggest that the variety of dissemination approaches is expanding and that districts experiencing significant enrollment losses may be the most aggressive in this area.

Target Audiences

As Exhibit 10 indicates, a higher proportion of administrators in high impact districts (90 percent of gaining and 92 percent of losing) target all families residing in the district, but only 74 percent of administrators in comparison districts do so. This suggests that efforts to disseminate information widely may contribute to student movement across district lines. Losing districts (8 percent) are less likely to target families living in other districts than gaining districts (30 percent) and comparison districts (27 percent). While this appears to indicate a payoff to districts that send information across district lines, administrators in several districts qualified their responses by noting that when they targeted families residing in other districts, it was because the students were already attending school in their district, through Open Enrollment or some other mechanism. Dissemination of information beyond district lines is controversial since the state prohibits districts from actively recruiting students.

Exhibit 10
Target Audiences and Information Disseminated about Open Enrollment (Fall 1992)

	Percent of Districts:		
	Gaining (N=20)	Losing (N=24)	Comparison (N=34)
Target Audiences			
All families in the district	90%	92%	74%
School personnel	50	46	50
Families in other districts	30	8	27
Particular subset of families in the district	10	13	21
Information			
Name of Contact person	100%	96%	100%
The application process	80	83	94
Ideas on how to make choices	55	58	53
Other information	30	29	47

Exhibit reads: Of those high impact gaining districts making an effort to disseminate information on Open Enrollment, administrators in 90 percent target all families living in their district.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Information

Exhibit 10 also presents the types of topics covered in districts' dissemination materials. Most provide the name of a contact person, as well as information on the Open Enrollment application process. About half of the districts suggest ideas on how to make educational choices. However, only about 30 percent of administrators in high impact districts reported providing some "other" information, but nearly half (47 percent) of those in comparison districts reported this. Other kinds of information cited included alternative choice options in the state, application deadline dates and information on specific communities.

Efforts to Disseminate More Information on Schools and Programs

If proponents of the market theory of educational choice are right, the Open Enrollment program will promote positive competition among schools--gaining districts would strive to maintain their status (and good programs), and losing districts (or those in fear of losing students) would strive to attract more students by improving their programs. Although the statute authorizing Open Enrollment prohibits districts from active recruitment of students or aggressive advertising, a natural outgrowth of interdistrict choice might reasonably be more emphasis on dissemination of information about schools and programs.

Exhibits 11-A and 11-B provide information on school district efforts to disseminate more information on schools and programs specifically in response to the Open Enrollment program. In general, administrators in losing and comparison districts are much more likely to report that they are currently disseminating information on schools and programs in response to Open Enrollment. Further, the topics covered are both greater in number and more often include information on academic indicators. Overall, these exhibits suggest that the gaining districts expend relatively little effort on promoting their schools and programs. Based on these data, one hypothesis might be that the districts attracting students rely on their existing reputations and find no need to promote or defend their educational programs.

Exhibit 11A
School District Efforts to Disseminate More Information on Schools and Programs (Fall 1992)

		Percent of Districts:		
Dissemination Efforts		Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
Open Enrollment led to dissemination of more information on schools/programs	No	73%	64%	50%
	Yes	27%	36%	50%

Exhibit reads: Seventy-three percent of administrators in high impact gaining districts reported that Open Enrollment did not lead them to disseminate more information on schools and programs than they did in the past.

Exhibit 11B
Target Areas and Topics Covered by Districts That Disseminate More Information on Schools and Programs (Fall 1992)

Dissemination Efforts	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=6)	Losing (N=10)	Comparison (N=17)
Target area:			
Both inside and outside district	67%	60%	53%
Within district	33	30	47
Outside district	0	10	0
School/program topics:			
Extracurriculars	67%	70%	30%
AP courses	50	60	40
Transportation	33	50	50
Graduation rates	17	20	80
Test-scores/grades	17	30	70
Child care	17	50	50
Other	17	80	20

Exhibit reads: Of those gaining districts reporting Open Enrollment prompted them to disseminate more information on schools and programs (6 districts), 67 percent targeted the information both inside and outside the district.

Note: Percents do not sum to 100 due to multiple responses.

As Exhibit 11-A shows, half or more than half of administrators in all strata reported that Open Enrollment did not prompt them to disseminate more information, but administrators in losing districts (36 percent) and comparison districts (50 percent) are much more likely than those in gaining districts (27 percent) to indicate that the program did prompt them to disseminate more information about schools and programs in their districts. Comparison districts may be reacting to their proximity to high impact districts by disseminating information in hopes of attracting nearby dissatisfied students, or they may simply want to hold on to the students currently enrolled.

Of those who disseminate more (Exhibit 11-B), more than half of administrators in all strata reported reaching outside of their own districts (67 percent in gaining, 60 percent in losing, and 53 percent in comparison districts). Many emphasized, however, that these were students who already attended school in their district but lived elsewhere. Viewed in light of the findings presented in Exhibit 9, however, which highlight the increasing prevalence of varied means of disseminating

information on Open Enrollment, administrators may also be seeking as wide an audience as possible for disseminating information on their specific schools and programs.

Regarding the topics covered by dissemination efforts (Exhibit 11-B), in gaining districts, administrators most often cited information on extracurricular activities (67 percent), advanced placement courses (50 percent), and transportation (33 percent). Although these same topics are prevalent in losing districts, administrators in this group also cited child care (50 percent), graduation rates (20 percent in losing versus 17 percent in gaining districts), test scores (30 percent in losing versus 17 percent in gaining districts), and "other" topics (80 percent in losing versus 17 percent in gaining districts). The emphasis in comparison districts is different; administrators there are far more likely than those in gaining districts to include information on graduation rates and test scores or grades. The news that they tell is apparently good since movement out of these districts is minimal.

The "other" topics cited by most of the losing districts and a few gaining or comparison districts included a broad array of information such as:

- Class size
- Special programs and educational specialists available
- Cooperative and tuition agreements with other districts
- School facilities
- District-level goals and beliefs and community atmosphere
- Scholarships available for students

Question 5: What Programmatic Outcomes or Effects Are Associated with the Open Enrollment Program in High Impact Districts?

Research to date on the effects of Open Enrollment on Minnesota school districts is limited, and the Open Enrollment option was relatively new at the time most research was conducted. Our survey of high impact districts addresses the effects of Open Enrollment on a wide variety of educational indicators in those districts where the most movement has occurred three school years after most districts began to participate. In interpreting the responses of administrators interviewed, however, one should keep in mind the relative role played by Open Enrollment in districts. As noted in the introduction, students can and do cross district lines through several other mechanisms in addition to Open Enrollment. This movement into and out of districts through mechanisms other than Open Enrollment is only one factor that may confound any direct cause and effect relationship between Open Enrollment and perceived impacts on school districts. The findings presented in this section should be considered suggestive rather than definitive.

The following sections explore the effects of Open Enrollment on: (1) attitudes toward the program and reasons for changing attitudes; (2) central administrative issues associated with Open Enrollment; (3) district finances; and (4) district programming.

Effects on Attitudes Toward the Open Enrollment Program

Since 1985 when Governor Rudy Perpich proposed that all Minnesota students, beginning with eleventh- and twelfth-graders, should be able to select "the public school that best serves their individual needs," Open Enrollment has sparked political controversy (Mazzoni, p. 45). Business, civic, and parent-educator organizations led by the governor and backed by the education commissioner supported the concept, but teachers, superintendents, and school board organizations resisted (Mazzoni, p. 46). Because of some initial hostility toward Open Enrollment among district administrators, some program advocates argue that they are a biased data source for judging the impacts of Open Enrollment. Certainly the overall effects and importance of Open Enrollment should not be judged by the reactions of school administrators alone. Nevertheless, their perspectives on and reactions to Open Enrollment are an important part of Minnesota's experiences with public school choice. In addition, their perceptions are important vis-a-vis the marketplace theory, because if administrators discount the effect of Open Enrollment, they will not likely change their programs in response to it. Exhibit 12-A compares the attitudes of administrators in our sample toward the Open Enrollment program prior to its implementation and at the time of our survey in the fall of 1992. Exhibit 12-B presents reasons that respondents cited for changes in attitude.

Overall, administrators in high impact (especially gaining) districts appear to have been somewhat predisposed to more positive attitudes toward Open Enrollment prior to its implementation than those in comparison districts. For example, in high impact gaining districts, 59 percent of administrators had a somewhat or very positive attitude toward the program compared to 47 percent of those in losing and 39 percent of those in comparison districts. Those who changed their view of the program over time most often came to view it in a more positive light, although administrators in losing districts (18 percent) were more than three times as likely as those in gaining districts (5 percent) to view Open Enrollment more negatively.

Exhibit 12A
School District Administrator Attitudes toward the Open Enrollment Program

	Percent of Districts:		
Attitude Prior to Implementation	Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
Very positive	27%	18%	21%
Somewhat positive	32	29	18
Somewhat negative	14	25	38
Very negative	14	18	9
No opinion	14	11	15
Change in Attitude			
No Change	54%	43%	53%
More positive	41	39	35
More negative	5	18	12

Exhibit reads: Twenty-seven percent of administrators in high impact gaining districts reported a very positive attitude towards Open Enrollment prior to its implementation.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit 12B
Most Common Reasons for a Change in Attitude toward the Open Enrollment Program

First-Mentioned Reason	Gaining (N=10)	Losing (N=16)	Comparison (N=16)
Positive outcomes for schools or districts	50%	31%	13%
Positive outcomes for parents or students	40	19	31
Negative outcomes for schools or districts	10	31	6
Open enrollment has had no effect on education	0	19	50

Exhibit reads: Of those administrators in high impact gaining districts whose attitudes toward Open Enrollment did change (10 districts), 50 percent said the reason is due to positive outcomes experienced by schools or districts.

Reasons for changes in attitude. Administrators in high impact gaining districts overwhelmingly cited positive reasons for a change in attitude toward Open Enrollment. Those in losing districts were far more likely to cite a negative reason than administrators in either gaining or comparison districts. Specifically, when asked why they changed their attitudes, administrators in gaining districts most often cited beneficial outcomes for schools and/or districts (50 percent). Specific positive outcomes cited included:

- The financial benefits of gaining students
- Interdistrict cooperation
- Positive competition between districts
- Programmatic growth or improvement

Nearly as many administrators in gaining districts (40 percent) cited positive outcomes for parents and students, including increased options with regard to where parents work as well as where their children attend school, and that if necessary students can have a "fresh start."

Administrators in one gaining and one comparison district as well as nearly a third (31 percent) of the losing districts also cited negative outcomes for schools and districts. This category included responses such as:

- Open Enrollment discourages parent and student commitment to particular schools or to problem solving in general (e.g., a student or family may decide to just leave a particular school rather than work through some problem they are having there)
- Confusing financial procedures
- Planning problems arising when districts waive the deadline for applications to transfer under Open Enrollment

Administrators in losing districts who changed their view of the program were as likely to cite positive as negative outcomes (31 percent each) for schools and districts. Some noted positive outcomes for parents and students (19 percent). Some also noted that Open Enrollment has had little effect on schools in the sense that it has caused less movement than expected, or that it is a political tool or a tool of convenience as opposed to a way to actually improve academic programming. Although about a third of administrators in comparison districts cited positive outcomes for parents and students, most (50 percent) asserted that Open Enrollment has had little effect on schools.

These data provide examples of the range of benefits and drawbacks administrators associate with the Open Enrollment program. They indicate that even when districts lose relatively large numbers of students through Open Enrollment, many administrators still find some merit in the program. As indicated earlier in this report, some of the losing districts are large and relatively wealthy. These districts may not feel the effects of movement out of the district as much as a small district with more limited financial resources. In addition, districts in any strata may be more or less likely to detect the specific effects of Open Enrollment depending on the extent to which (1) students enter or exit their district through other mechanisms and (2) they are able to enter into cooperative arrangements or share resources with surrounding districts.

Administrative Issues

According to state policy, to participate in the Open Enrollment program, families must file an application before January 15 of a given year to enroll a child in a new district the following September. In actuality, districts may agree to waive this deadline and accept applications for entry at any time of year. Up until the 1990-91 school year, students had to re-apply each year if they intended to continue attending the non-resident district. Currently, reapplication is not required. A student now needs to submit only one application for the entire time that she or he attends the same non-resident district. Still, in comparison with some other mechanisms used to transfer students across district lines (such as school-board-to-school-board agreements or cooperative "pairing and sharing" arrangements between districts), Open Enrollment requires a separate "agreement" or

permission for each student using it in contrast to a single interdistrict agreement covering any student wishing to participate, and therefore may be more burdensome to some districts.

In terms of additional paperwork generated by Open Enrollment, the greatest burden theoretically falls on the receiving district. It must process the application, approve or disapprove it, and notify the family, the state, and the losing district of this decision. In addition, no-shows and students who transfer in but leave after a few weeks require follow-up. Interviews conducted with a few high impact districts in the winter of 1991 indicated that the paperwork was a particular problem for one of the large urban districts and its nearby suburbs, where many students come and go throughout the school year. The losing district receives and files a notice that a student will no longer attend school there and sends student records to the receiving district. While the Open Enrollment statute requires the losing district to conduct "exit interviews" with students and families, the state has no way to monitor whether or not these interviews occur. Between 53 and 62 percent of administrators across all strata of our sample indicated that they did not conduct <u>any</u> exit interviews. Between 4 and 21 percent of administrators in all strata reported conducting these interviews with at least 75 percent of students leaving their districts through Open Enrollment; the districts we have defined as high impact losing districts conducted the fewest. Since losing districts comprise some of the largest districts in the state, they may simply not have time to conduct these interviews.

In addition to the application to use Open Enrollment, both sending and receiving districts must go through additional paperwork for special education students because the basic state aid does not follow them automatically. A receiving district bills a sending district for the actual costs of educating these students.

Our data suggest that, contrary to what might be expected, losing districts may experience more administrative burden from Open Enrollment than other districts. We asked administrators three questions related to local administration of the Open Enrollment program:

(1) How does Open Enrollment affect the amount of paperwork you must complete?

(2) Do you waive the state-suggested deadline for students applying to transfer under Open Enrollment?

(3) Why do students use mechanisms other than Open Enrollment to enter your district?

As Exhibit 13-A indicates, at least half of the administrators in all strata reported no change or a small increase in paperwork. While exactly half (50 percent) of administrators in losing districts reported this, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of those in gaining districts and well over three-

quarters of those in comparison districts (83 percent) reported no change or a small increase. However, administrators in fully half of the losing districts (50 percent) report a large increase in administrative paperwork due to Open Enrollment--notably more than administrators in gaining districts (27 percent) or comparison (18 percent) districts. While administrators in sending districts do not have to complete more paperwork per student than those in receiving districts, several reasons may account for this finding.

Exhibit 13A
Effect of the Open Enrollment Program on Administrative Burden (Fall 1992)

Increase/Decrease in paperwork	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
No change	23%	14%	27%
Small increase	50	36	56
Large increase	27	50	18
Decrease	0	0	0
District waives state suggested deadline for applications			
Yes	82	79	59
No	14	21	41
Don't know	4	0	0

Exhibit reads: District administrators in 23 percent of high impact gaining districts reported that the Open Enrollment program has caused no change in administrative paperwork.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Our sample of losing districts includes some of the largest in the state, and thus, in terms of sheer numbers of students using Open Enrollment, these districts do more paperwork. In addition, larger districts are more bureaucratic, and keeping track of the use of one more program may seem especially burdensome. Tracking down some of the information for our survey in the larger districts was notably more difficult, for example. In addition, as noted above, districts where students transfer in but leave shortly thereafter generate extra paperwork--one large district where this occurs was included in our sample of losing districts. Finally, if Open Enrollment adversely affects a district, its

administrators may be more likely to perceive the paperwork as burdensome. Our sample of losing districts also includes more of the smallest districts than does the sample of gaining districts, and administrators in the smallest districts, where relatively more students are exiting, may be especially likely to view Open Enrollment as burdensome.

Waiving the state deadline for application to use Open Enrollment. Because districts were concerned about planning for a possible sudden influx or departure of students using Open Enrollment, the state imposed a January 1 deadline for submission of applications to use the option for the following September. This applied to all districts except those under a desegregation order (Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth); families may apply to enter and leave these districts at any time. Experience proved the January 1 date to be problematic because it came in the middle of an extended school holiday so that parents and students making last minute decisions could not visit schools in session. Thus, as of the 1991-92 school year, the deadline was extended to January 15. Districts may waive this deadline as long as both the sending and receiving districts agree on this decision. In 1991, anecdotal information from informal conversations with a small number of high impact districts suggested that many administrators took a more flexible view of when students could come and go using Open Enrollment.

In the current survey we again asked whether the district waived the state deadline for accepting applications under Open Enrollment. Most administrators in high impact districts indicated that this was indeed their policy (82 percent of those in losing and 79 percent of those in gaining districts). Administrators in comparison districts were less likely to allow exceptions (59 percent). This suggests that flexibility may be a contributor to impact--more student movement will occur in districts that allow families to make decisions about when to apply as well as where to attend school.

Use of Other Mechanisms

For those districts where students entered through mechanisms other than Open Enrollment during 1991-92, Exhibit 13-B shows that the reason cited by well over half of the administrators in all strata was that students missed the state-suggested application deadline (58 percent in gaining, 63 percent in losing, and 59 percent in comparison districts). Even in districts that waive the state deadline, other mechanisms are useful for accommodating individual situations. Several respondents, including some from those districts that waive the deadline, noted during the interviews that they personally liked deadlines for planning purposes.

Exhibit 13B
Why Students Use Mechanisms Other Than Open Enrollment to Enter a District
(Fall 1992)

	Percent of Districts:		
	Gaining (N=19)	Losing (N=19)	Comparison (N=29)
Reasons:			
Missed deadline for Open Enrollment	58%	63%	59%
More convenient/quicker; less paperwork	11	0	7
Other	20	32	31
Don't know	11	5	3

Exhibit reads: Fifty-eight percent of administrators in high impact gaining districts reported that students use mechanisms other than Open Enrollment to enter their district because they missed the deadline.

Administrators in a few gaining (11 percent) and comparison (7 percent) districts reported that students use other mechanisms because they involve less paperwork or are quicker than the Open Enrollment application process. Other reasons cited were not related to program administration--for example, district tradition of using other mechanisms, the use of tuition agreements for transportation-related or financial reasons[3], or the use of tuition agreements in the case of special education students.

Effects on District Finances

In the early days of Open Enrollment, nearly a quarter (22 percent) of all district administrators indicated that they expected the option to have a "mostly negative" impact on district

[3] Some districts prefer tuition agreements because these often include provisions for transportation into the receiving district. Some sending districts also prefer them because if the per pupil expenditure is less in the receiving district, the sending district pays less than the general education foundation aid that would follow the student under Open Enrollment.

financial resources (Rubenstein et al., p. 47). This principally reflected a concern that districts would lose large numbers of students as well as the state general education foundation aid that follows them. Later informal interviews with administrators in a limited number of high impact districts indicated that, as of the 1990-91 school year, in most cases the economic impacts of Open Enrollment were modest. However, in a few cases, the revenue loss was enough to tip the balance for very small schools, forcing them to consolidate with other districts. A small number of gaining districts received enough new revenues to add staff and increase program offerings.

In the current round of data collection, we explored two areas of economic impact: (1) the effects of Open Enrollment on school district budgets and (2) the programmatic effects on school districts experiencing net gains and net losses in students.

Exhibit 14-A presents the median percent change between 1989-90 and 1991-92 in five budget line items for the three strata. Special education is included because of anecdotal information suggesting relatively heavy use of Open Enrollment by families of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Since one would expect some annual increase in all district budgets, the comparison districts become an important means for gauging how strong the Open Enrollment effect is in the high impact districts. About half of the comparison districts are located near gaining districts and half are located near losing districts. We would expect general regional school budget fluctuations to be comparable across all three groups.

In general, with the exception of changes in general education foundation aid (GEFA), budgets in all three strata appear to have experienced similar changes. The median change in total operating revenues is the same for gaining and losing districts (13 percent), and is only three percentage points less for comparison districts (10 percent). In addition, the median growth experienced in any category (except GEFA) by gaining districts differs by no more than 6 percentage points from that experienced by losing districts. With regard to special education funds and capital expenditures, however, comparison districts experienced much more growth than high impact districts, suggesting that changes in these lines are not closely tied to the Open Enrollment option.

Our interviews and common sense indicate that a myriad of factors may offset the financial effects of Open Enrollment. In addition to the other reasons noted above by administrators, our data indicate that most districts experience at least some movement into the district, and by inference, probably movement in both directions, from mechanisms other than Open Enrollment. Especially in very large districts there is often substantial student movement through multiple mechanisms. Even in small districts, several administrators noted that the financial effects of Open Enrollment were offset by students transferring into the district through other means.

Exhibit 14A
Median Percent Increase in Selected Budget Line Items: 1989-90 to 1991-92

Budget Line Items:	Percent of Districts: Gaining[a]	Losing[b]	Comparison[c]
General education foundation aid	31%	10%	22%
Transportation funds	14	9	17
Total operating budget (excluding capital expenditures)	13	13	10
Special education funds	4	10	15
Capital expenditures	2	6	18

Exhibit reads: Among high impact gaining districts, the median increase in general education foundation aid revenues from 1989-90 to 1991-92 was 31 percent.

Note: Median percent increase is calculated by taking the difference between the 1989-90 budget and the 1991-92 budget, and dividing that figure by the base year budget (1989-90).

Finally, while median figures are useful for looking at "the big picture" across the three groups of districts, they do not capture the range of experiences of high impact districts. Thus, for a few line items key to the financial health of districts, we examine the range of experiences through some case study scenarios. Below we discuss each budget category.

General education foundation aid. General education foundation aid is the basic state aid that follows students as they transfer from one district to another. As we would expect, administrators in responding gaining districts indicated much greater growth in this area (the median change was 31 percent) than those in losing districts (10 percent). In comparison districts, the basic state aid grew by 22 percent. In interpreting these data, it is noteworthy that gaining districts are more likely to experience a greater change in total enrollment than losing districts--i.e., 76 percent of the gaining districts experienced a greater-than-5 percent growth in enrollment while 59 percent of

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[a] Due to missing data, the N for gaining districts varies from 17 to 19 for specific budget categories.

[b] Due to missing data, the N for losing districts varies from 21 to 23 for specific budget categories.

[c] Due to missing data, the N for comparison districts varies from 27 to 30 for specific budget categories.

losing districts had a greater-than-5 percent decrease in enrollment. This means that GEFA is more affected in the gaining than in the losing group.

However, while none of the gaining districts experienced decreases in GEFA over the period examined and some experienced increases of up to 66 percent, several losing districts experienced decreases. While decreases in general state aid were generally about 25 percent or less, one losing district experienced a decrease of 46 percent between 1989-90 and 1991-92. Interviews with administrators in the five districts with the greatest decreases revealed that, except for one, their enrollments were less than 250. Two of these districts enrolled fewer than 100 students. Other than very small enrollments, which administrators said limited programming opportunities, reasons cited for movement out of these districts varied. Administrators in two of the five districts said student movement out of the district was related to consolidations. In one case, residents of one of the paired districts resented the high school being located in the other district, and tried to force administrators to relocate the high school by enrolling their children elsewhere. Another administrator said students who were soon to be attending school in the district with which they were consolidating were transferring early to get used to the new system. Administrators in two of these districts said students used Open Enrollment to attend schools closer to their homes or to their parents' jobs. In the fifth district, the high school had been located in another district since 1983-84; students who previously left their home district through some other mechanism began using Open Enrollment.

Finally, it is noteworthy that some of the losing districts actually experienced increases in GEFA, the greatest being 74 percent. The general characteristics of this particular district underscore the fact that the smaller, more geographically isolated districts appear to suffer most from the negative effects of exiting students. The district is a large suburb of Minneapolis where, in 1991-92, 127 students left, and 93 entered the district using Open Enrollment. The administrator there cited a number of reasons why students enter and leave using Open Enrollment as well as other choice options--in an area with a wide variety of choices within a reasonable distance.

Transportation funds. School districts in Minnesota receive state aid for student transportation on the basis of a headcount of the number of students who attend school there. When students transfer under Open Enrollment, the receiving district is required only to transport the student from the district line to the new school. How a student gets to the district line is up to the student and family. Although the practice is probably relatively rare, interviews with a limited number of high impact districts in 1990-91 revealed that some districts sent buses across district lines to pick up students. It is unclear whether or not these districts requested reimbursement for these students.

Given this structure, we would expect that, in the absence of intervening factors, the transportation funds in gaining districts would increase relatively more than in losing districts, since districts have no transportation obligations to students who leave. Our data partially support this reasoning. Transportation funds in gaining districts grew by a median of 14 percent; in losing districts, the transportation budgets grew by a median of 9 percent. While we cannot explain the larger increase in comparison districts (a median of 17 percent), it could be due to more movement through other choice options or transfer mechanisms.

Total operating budget. With regard to the districts' total operating budget (excluding capital expenditures), responding administrators in both gaining and losing districts report a median increase of 13 percent, while those in comparison districts report an increase only somewhat less (10 percent). The lack of significant differences among the strata suggests that, as suspected based on earlier findings, Open Enrollment has little overall effect on district finances.

The change in operating budgets ranged from a decrease of about 25 percent in both high impact groups to an increase of 204 percent in one gaining district and 48 percent in one losing district. In the comparison districts, the change in total operating budgets ranged from a decrease of 8 percent to an increase of 82 percent. The unusually high increases in gaining districts (two indicated changes of greater than 100 percent) were due to consolidations that had occurred after the base year used to calculate the change. Excluding these two districts, the greatest increase was 36 percent, more comparable to that experienced in losing districts.

Special education funds. Anecdotal information from prior interviews with selected high impact districts suggested the possibility of heavy use of Open Enrollment by families of students with Individual Education Plans. Our data do not confirm this. Comparison districts experienced the greatest increase in special education revenues--a median of 15 percent, followed by losing districts (10 percent) and gaining districts (4 percent). Given the characteristics of our samples, it is not surprising that special education funds in losing districts grew more than these funds in gaining districts. The group of high impact urban and suburban losing districts contains some of the state's largest districts, areas where there are likely to be larger numbers of special education students enrolled and where these students have access to a wider array of special services. An earlier discussion in this report (Exhibit 4) also suggests that the difference in growth between special education funds in gaining and losing districts is <u>not</u> due to the use of Open Enrollment to transfer special education students to particular districts. Finally, the relatively greater growth in comparison districts may simply reflect the national tendency to label more and more students as learning disabled.

Capital expenditures. Under the Open Enrollment program, districts may not turn away a student who applies to transfer if space is available. Districts are under no obligation to construct new schools or classrooms to meet demand; nor are they prohibited from doing so. According to the figures provided to us by high impact districts, capital expenditures funds grew very little over the past three years--a median of 6 percent in losing and 2 percent in gaining districts. This is not surprising, given difficult economic times. This suggests that gaining districts are probably filling empty seats in existing schools. However, in comparison districts, these funds grew by a median of 18 percent. This may be because while these districts are generally comparable to gaining districts financially, notably fewer of them fall in the highest poverty category, as estimated by the proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

Administrator perception of reasons for changes in budgets. Exhibit 14-B presents administrators' perceptions of reasons for changes in the budget occurring between 1989-90 and 1991-92. In response to an open-ended question, administrators in high impact gaining districts most often cited Open Enrollment as the first-mentioned reason (36 percent), and well over half (59 percent) cited Open Enrollment as at least one of several factors affecting the budget. Administrators in losing districts cited other factors (such as general inflation) not related to Open Enrollment most often as the first-mentioned reason (43 percent), and fewer than half (46 percent) cited Open Enrollment as one of several reasons. As noted earlier, gaining districts generally had a greater change in total enrollment, and thus an increase in basic state aid, than did losing districts. Comparison districts, because they had less movement due to the program, were unlikely to cite Open Enrollment as a reason for changes in their budgets. An interesting finding from this survey item is that the losing districts are not particularly inclined to blame Open Enrollment for financial changes.

Exhibit 14B
Administrator Perceptions of Reasons for Budget Changes

First Mentioned Reason:	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
The Open Enrollment program	36%	21%	3%
Changes in state or federal funding	23	14	9
Other, not related to Open Enrollment	23	43	53
Normal shifts in enrollment patterns	5	11	18
Don't know	13	11	18
At least one reason was the Open Enrollment program	59%	46%	6%

Exhibit reads: Administrators in 36 percent of high impact gaining districts cited Open Enrollment as the first-mentioned reason for changes in their budgets, while 59 percent stated it was one of several reasons.

Note: Percents do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The other factors mentioned by all districts included: student movement through other mechanisms, changing transportation costs, shifts in enrollment patterns not related to Open Enrollment, general inflation, local tax increases, referendums or fund-raising efforts, staffing or staff salary changes, changes in state or federal funding levels, and programmatic changes (improvements or cuts).

Effects on District Programming

Proponents of educational choice often argue that programs like Minnesota's Open Enrollment option will, through fostering a business-like competition among schools, result in strong schools becoming stronger, whereas schools with less than adequate programs will be forced to either improve to attract students or fall by the wayside. Critics of choice counterargue that if districts lose students, their programming and the students who remain--many of whom have nowhere else to go--will suffer as a result. With regard to programs at the district level, Rubenstein et al. (1992) indicate that at that early date in the history of Open Enrollment, most responding districts viewed Open

Enrollment as having no impact on key factors that might be associated with school improvement or educational reform initiatives, even in districts that gained or lost the most students (p. 49). However, of administrators who did perceive an effect, those seeing positive effects outnumbered those seeing negative effects by a large margin.

We asked district superintendents four sets of questions relating to the effects Open Enrollment has had on their school programs as of fall, 1992:

(1) Has the district has taken steps specifically designed either to draw students into the district or to discourage students from leaving?

(2) Has the net increase or decrease in students in the district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused them to take a variety of actions affecting programming?

(3) Has the Open Enrollment program led the district to initiate cooperative arrangements and/or interdistrict agreements or consolidations?

(4) Have selected educational indicators changed recently and if those changes can be attributed to the Open Enrollment program?

Steps taken to draw students into a district or discourage them from leaving. First, we asked district administrators whether they had taken steps specifically designed to either draw students in or discourage them from leaving. Then, we asked those who reported they had taken steps whether the purpose was to draw students in, discourage students from leaving, or both, as well as specifically what steps they had taken. Exhibits 15-A and 15-B present the results. Administrators in losing and comparison districts are much more likely to have taken such steps, many of which directly affect academics and the learning climate in schools.

Only one gaining district reported taking steps to draw students in or discourage them from leaving. There are at least two possible explanations for why administrators in gaining districts do not take steps to draw students in or discourage them from leaving. One is that they are attractive by virtue of their existing programs and therefore do not feel the need to take such steps. (Some might argue that they are somewhat complacent regarding their academic programs and related services.) However, as some administrators articulated, it is also possible that these administrators do improve their programs--expand course offerings, add counseling and support, etc.--but do not view these as actions designed specifically to encourage student movement into or out of the district.

Exhibit 15A
District Attempts to Draw Students In or Discourage Them from Leaving (Fall 1992)

		Percent of Districts:		
		Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
Districts reporting having taken steps specifically designed to draw students in or discourage them from leaving	No	95%	57%	71%
	Yes	5	43	29

Exhibit reads: Administrators in 95 percent of high impact gaining districts reported that they have not taken steps specifically designed to draw students in or discourage them from leaving.

Exhibit 15B
Actions Districts Take to Draw Students In or Discourage Them from Leaving (Fall 1992)

	Percent of Districts:[a]	
	Losing (N=12)	Comparison (N=10)
Purpose		
To draw students in	25%	20%
Discourage students from leaving	42	60
Both	25	20
Don't Know	8	0
Actions		
Expand course offerings	58%	70%
Special transportation arrangements	42	60
Made physical plant improvements	42	30
Increased extracurricular offerings	33	40
Added counseling and support services	25	50
Implemented/expand child care	17	0
Instituted specialized curriculum	0	70
Other Action	58	40

Exhibit reads: Twenty-five percent of administrators in losing districts reporting having taken steps specifically designed to draw students in or discourage them from leaving (12 districts) said the purpose was to draw students in.

Note: Percents (of actions) do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

[a] Data on gaining districts are not presented because only one administrator in a gaining district reported any attempt specifically designed to draw students in or discourage them from leaving.

In contrast, significant proportions of losing and comparison districts acted aggressively. While administrators were principally concerned with discouraging students from leaving, about a quarter of administrators in each of these two strata indicated that they hoped to draw students into the district as well (25 percent of administrators in losing and 20 percent of those in comparison districts).

With regard to specific actions taken, the most common among administrators in losing districts include:

- Expanding course offerings (58 percent)
- Making special transportation arrangements (42 percent)
- Making physical plant improvements (42 percent)
- Increasing extracurricular offerings (33 percent)

These administrators also often took some other action. Examples cited include:

- Improved public relations or better publicity
- Placing an ad about their school in the newspaper of a neighboring district
- Hiring a new superintendent
- Entering into interdistrict cooperative agreements

Although comparison districts, by definition, have experienced little student movement because of Open Enrollment, nearly a third of those in our sample report active steps to hold or attract students (principally the former). They are, in fact, apparently more aggressive in this regard than the losing districts. For example, in comparison districts where administrators took steps, in general a higher proportion of them reported having taken nearly all of the specific steps that we inquired about than did administrators in the losing districts. Most expanded course offerings (70 percent), added counseling and support services (50 percent), or instituted a specialized curriculum (70 percent).

These data seem to support the idea that administrators in schools that are losing students or in those that remain stable will take action to avoid further or future losses. Many of the actions that they report affect the academic program or the learning climate in schools.

Effects on program. We asked district superintendents their views on whether student movement through Open Enrollment affected academic and student support services in their schools. Their responses suggest that most of the time Open Enrollment is not the main cause for any of the possible actions that we listed. Fewer than one-third of administrators responded that Open Enrollment caused them to take any single action. Our data suggest that the option does, however, have some effect, and while schools with net increases are about as likely to be affected as schools with net decreases, in a few areas student movement due to Open Enrollment is more likely to affect those schools with a net loss of students. The data may also suggest that some administrators find creative ways to deal with enrollment decreases that may result in improved programs.

Exhibits 16 and 17 present administrator views on the effect of Open Enrollment on various programmatic factors. Note that in these exhibits we have stratified the sample differently. All districts (including those in the comparison group) are classified as either experiencing a net gain or a net loss in students during the 1991-92 school year due to Open Enrollment. Those districts that gained the same number of students that they lost through Open Enrollment were not asked this question.

Specifically, we asked those superintendents in districts with a net gain in enrollment due to Open Enrollment whether the increase had caused them to take a variety of positive actions, such as hiring more teachers or other staff, and adding academic courses or student support services. Superintendents in districts with a net loss were asked if the decrease in students due to Open Enrollment had caused them to take a variety of negative actions, such as laying off teachers or other staff.

Exhibit 16 indicates that administrators in districts experiencing net gains most often mentioned that the net increase in students caused them to hire more teachers (32 percent), hire other staff (28 percent), or add student support services (11 percent). Some mentioned adding academic courses (9 percent). Exhibit 17 indicates that administrators in districts experiencing a net loss of students most often indicated that the effects included laying off teachers (26 percent) or other staff (26 percent), and canceling academic courses (16 percent). The program rarely affected extracurricular activities or extreme actions such as building or closing a school.

With regard to hiring or laying off teachers and other staff, administrators in net gain schools are about as likely as those in net loss schools to report that student movement caused them to take action. However, with regard to adding or canceling academic courses and "other" actions reported, when administrators report Open Enrollment does have an effect, it is more likely a negative one.

Exhibit 16
District Administrators' Views on the Effect of Open Enrollment on School Districts Experiencing Net Gains in Students (Fall 1992)

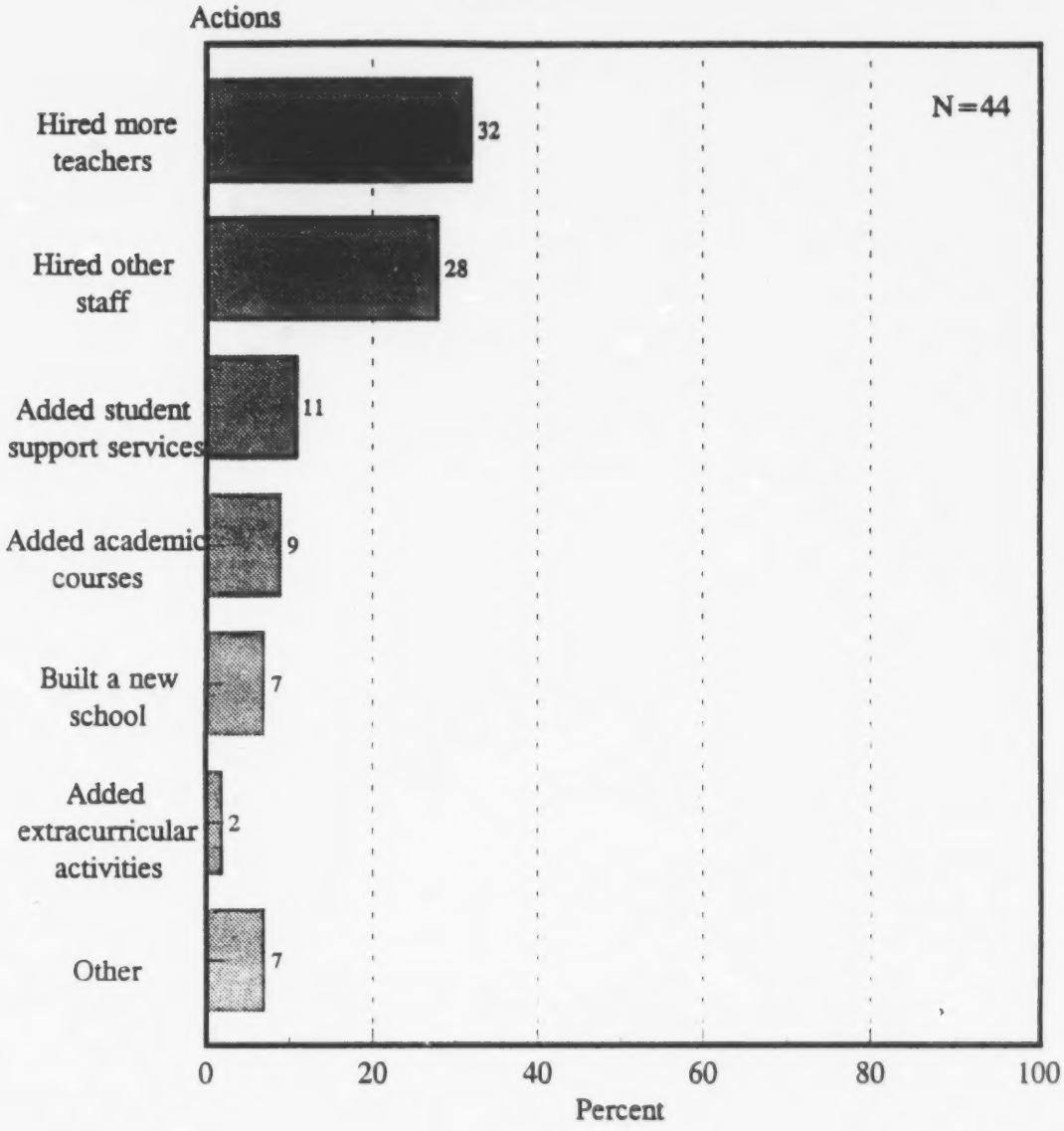

Exhibit reads: Of those districts where more students entered than left using Open Enrollment 1991-92, district administrators in 32 percent indicated that Open Enrollment caused them to hire more teachers.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 becauses multiple responses were allowed.

Exhibit 17
District Administrators' Views on the Effect of Open Enrollment on School Districts Experiencing Net Losses in Students (Fall 1992)

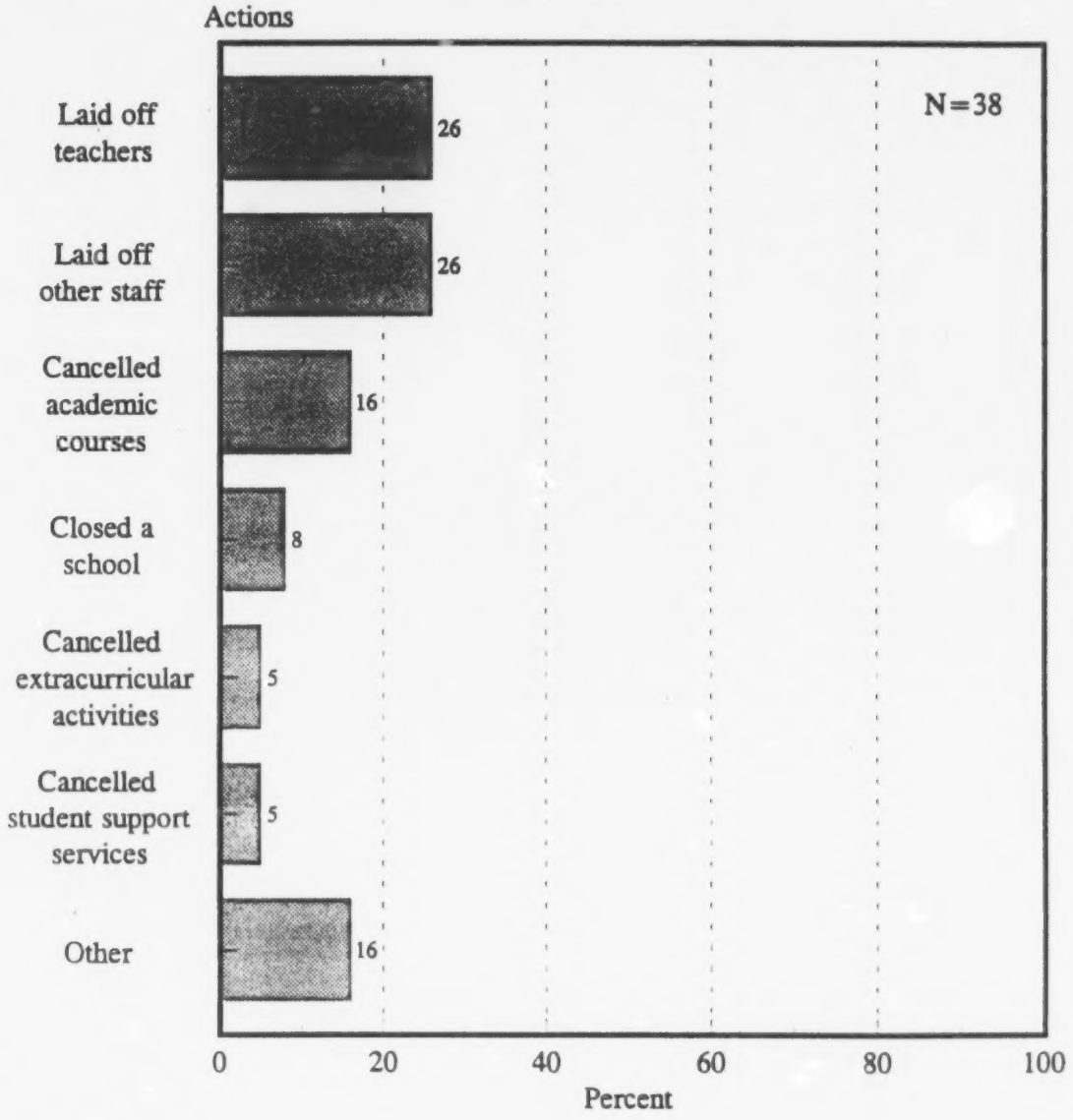

Exhibit reads: Of those districts where more students left than entered using Open Enrollment 1991-92, district administrators in 26 percent indicated that Open Enrollment caused them to lay off teachers.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

While administrators in 9 percent of net gain districts reported adding academic courses, those in 16 percent of net loss districts reported canceling them. Administrators in 7 percent of net gain districts reported other positive actions, while 16 percent of those in net loss districts reported other negative actions. On the positive side, other actions included things such as adding a computer lab, adding a new bus route, or leasing a new facility for student overflow. On the negative side, other actions mainly included "general financial hardships" from the loss in basic state aid. For example, one administrator reported a loss of $100,000 in student aid. Administrators in some of the districts contemplated or actually took actions to avoid further attrition, which may strengthen their programs in the long run. One administrator said he was entering into consolidation talks with another district. Another noted that he had entered an interdistrict cooperative agreement to avoid taking negative actions as a result of enrollment loss.

Effect on cooperative arrangements and interdistrict agreements. Rubenstein et al. reported that when asked to predict the impact of choice options on relationships among districts, administrators voiced little agreement. Forty-three percent predicted that competition for students between districts would increase, while 31 percent predicted increased cooperation, and 27 percent predicted no change (page 52). One hypothesis regarding the effects of the Open Enrollment program on districts and schools is that the program might lead to various types of interdistrict cooperative or tuitioning agreements, or to consolidations. Through these mechanisms, districts could pool their resources and maintain or strengthen program offerings and services. These arrangements could potentially both discourage students from leaving a district (and prevent loss of state general education revenue) and draw students in. Additionally, when students attend non-resident districts under cooperative or tuitioning agreements, in contrast to the Open Enrollment program, the resident district continues to receive the general education revenue from the state and negotiates the amount of tuition paid to the attending district. Thus, even if students leave the resident district, the district may retain some portion of revenue generated by the student.

We explored interdistrict cooperative arrangements in two ways. First, we asked superintendents whether the Open Enrollment program led their districts to initiate three specific types of cooperative arrangements:

- Distance learning--teaching courses through closed-circuit television
- Traveling teachers--a teacher works for two or more districts and travels between them
- Offering more courses through school cooperation--students at one school can take certain courses at another

We also asked superintendents in an open-ended question whether they were currently involved in a cooperative or tuitioning agreement or whether they had consolidated, and if so, when the agreement or consolidation took effect. We reasoned that arrangements effective during 1989-90 or later could possibly be in reaction to or a direct effect of the Open Enrollment program (mandatory for large districts in 1989-90 and all districts in 1990-91).

Exhibit 18 presents the responses to these items. While relatively few districts reported that the specific cooperative arrangements we asked about resulted from Open Enrollment, superintendents in losing and comparison districts were at least twice as likely to report creating each kind of arrangement in response to Open Enrollment as administrators in gaining districts. For example, while only 9 percent of administrators in gaining districts reported offering more courses through school cooperation in response to the program, 18 percent of administrators in losing and 27 percent of those in comparison districts reported this arrangement. The next-most-often-mentioned category

Exhibit 18
Effect of the Open Enrollment Program on Cooperative Arrangements or Interdistrict Agreements (Fall 1992)

Specific Cooperative Arrangements	Percent of Districts		
	Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
Offering more courses through school cooperation	9%	18%	27%
Distance Learning	5	11	18
Traveling teachers	5	11	15
Other	9	18	15
Any Interdistrict Cooperative or Tuition Agreement or Consolidation during 1989-90 or later	18%	50%	50%

Exhibit reads: District administrators in 9 percent of high impact gaining districts reported that Open Enrollment led their district to offer more courses through school cooperation.

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is "other" cooperative arrangement, and while 9 percent of administrators in gaining districts reported some other arrangement, 18 percent of those in losing and 15 percent of those in comparison districts reported other actions. "Other" responses included paired sports and special education programs.

In a separate open-ended question we asked about the existence of interdistrict cooperative or tuition agreements as well as actual consolidations. Districts reported the following types:

- Interdistrict cooperative agreements. Often called "pairing" or "sharing," the agreements allow two or more districts (particularly small districts) to pool students from certain grades or portions of grades. Each district must maintain full programming for at least three grades. For example, one district might serve all students in grades K - 6, while another district serves all secondary students.

- Non-resident student attendance agreements. One district transfers a student to a non-resident district. This transfer may occur at any time during the year and need not be open ended (i.e., at the time of the agreement either district may stipulate a termination date).

- Tuition agreements between districts. A district enrolls non-resident students and charges the resident district a tuition rate agreed to prior to enrollment. The resident district is responsible for the student's transportation.

As Exhibit 18 shows, interdistrict cooperative arrangements and/or consolidations have become important factors in both losing and comparison districts in recent years. However, our data suggest that Open Enrollment has played a major role in engendering cooperation only in the districts suffering significant enrollment losses specifically because of that option. Nearly half of administrators in losing districts that entered into an interdistrict cooperative or tuition agreement or consolidation since 1989-90 say that the action was specifically in response to Open Enrollment. This was true of only one gaining and one comparison district.

We uncovered factors other than Open Enrollment that encouraged interdistrict cooperation as well. Many respondents attributed their agreements to their small size in combination with normal budget constraints and difficult economic times. These districts wanted to pool their resources to maintain academic programming. For example, in one case, a district entered into an agreement with three other districts to build a consolidated high school. All the participating districts now tuition their secondary students to a new secondary school district. The superintendent of the district in our sample noted that by eliminating the duplication of secondary school services among districts, they could offer quality programming more efficiently. In other cases, smaller districts had already lost students -principally due to limited course offerings -through other mechanisms prior to Open

Enrollment, and needed to improve their programs. In another recently-consolidated district, the superintendent entered agreements prior to 1989-90 as a first step in the consolidation process.

Our interviews do suggest that even when Open Enrollment does not play a major role, it plays an indirect or facilitating role in some cases. For example, superintendents in two districts indicated that while Open Enrollment did not directly cause them to enter into agreements, they had experienced some decrease in revenue due to students leaving the district under the Open Enrollment program, and this gave them the extra "push" that they needed. In another instance where three districts in our sample consolidated, administrators viewed Open Enrollment as a positive factor in the consolidation process. In order for the referendum on district consolidation to pass, district officials thought it important for residents to know that students could attend a school other than the consolidated one if they wished.

Effects of Open Enrollment on selected educational indicators. Rubenstein et al. found that in 1989-90, districts reported little impact from Open Enrollment on various indicators associated with educational improvement or reform (p. 49). However, among administrators who did see an effect, those seeing positive effects outnumbered those seeing negative effects by a large margin. Our informal conversations with administrators in a few high impact districts in 1990-91 also suggested limited impacts on curriculum and instruction, student-teacher ratio, or other school- and classroom-based changes.

We explored this issue further in the current survey of high impact administrators. Specifically, we asked them whether changes in selected educational indicators had occurred since 1988-89 (the year before wide-scale implementation of the Open Enrollment program), and if so, about the magnitude and direction of the change. Finally, we asked about factors to which the change could be attributed. Administrators were asked in advance of the telephone interview to provide us with actual numbers regarding the selected indicators at two points in time (1988-89 and 1991-92). In addition, we asked administrators whether the cause was any of the choice options implemented by the state (mentioning Open Enrollment specifically) or whether the cause lies elsewhere. Indicators that we asked about included:

- Student-teacher ratios in both elementary and secondary schools
- High school electives offered
- Extracurricular offerings
- Number of student counselors

- Advanced placement classes
- Magnet or specialty programs
- Higher level math and science classes, and
- The percentage of dropouts returning to school.

As Exhibit 19 shows, district administrators reported change in many educational indicators over the past five years. Administrators in losing districts were somewhat less likely to report changes than others. For example, while 68 percent of administrators in gaining and 70 percent of those in comparison districts reported changes in the student-teacher ratio in elementary schools, only 50 percent of administrators in losing districts reported this to be the case. The same pattern is true regarding the ratio in secondary schools, the number of student counselors, and the number of magnet

Exhibit 19
District Administrator Views on Changes in Selected Educational Indicators (Fall 1992)

Indicators	Percent of Districts: Gaining (N=22)	Losing (N=28)	Comparison (N=34)
Administrators report change since 1988-89 in:			
Student-teacher ratio-elementary	68%	50%	70%
Student-teacher ratio-secondary	50	43	73
High school electives	46	53	71
Extra curricular offerings	41	47	47
Student counselors	37	25	44
Advanced placement classes	23	39	33
Return of dropouts to school	18	18	15
Magnet/specialty programs	18	11	29
Higher-level math & science classes	14	39	44

Exhibit reads: Administrators in 68 percent of high impact gaining districts reported a change in the student-teacher ratio in elementary schools since 1988-89.

Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

or specialty programs. This may be the result of the tendency for losing districts in our sample to experience less change in total enrollment than gaining districts.

Due to an extremely small number of respondents reporting a change as the result of Open Enrollment, an exhibit is not presented for these data. In most cases, our respondents did not view Open Enrollment as a major factor causing change in these indicators. When they did, gaining districts most often reported positive effects. In losing districts, when Open Enrollment was cited as the cause, the effects were negative.

In gaining districts, Open Enrollment was cited as directly causing a change in five indicators: (1) the student-teacher ratio in both elementary and secondary schools, (2) the numbers of student counselors, (3) advanced placement classes, (4) magnet or specialty programs, and (5) higher level math and science classes. Although the effect on the student-teacher ratio in elementary schools was most often an increase, in secondary schools the effect was just as often a decrease. With regard to the other indicators, the effect in gaining districts was likely to be an increase in the number of positions or offerings. This is not surprising, given the increased student aid that follows students into the district. In losing districts, where exiting students mean less money in the budget, classes became smaller, but programming (e.g., higher level math and science classes) or support services (e.g., number of student counselors) also suffered in some cases.

Districts Whose Experiences with Open Enrollment Changed during the Years under Study

As noted in the introduction to this report, only nine districts out of the total of 84 in our study had a substantially different experience with Open Enrollment in 1991-92 than they did 1990-91, casing their status (gaining, losing, or comparison) to change. While one district changed from one high impact status to another (losing to gaining), the other eight districts experienced more subtle changes, to or from low impact status.

A closer look at these nine districts indicates that they are very similar to other districts in the sample along the major stratifiers (the percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, urbanicity, and the percent minority enrollment). Six of the nine, however, have total enrollments of 250 or fewer, reinforcing a general impression that often it is the small, rural school districts that stand to experience the greatest effects from Open Enrollment.

The reasons these districts cited for changes in the use of Open Enrollment most often included increased dissemination efforts (4 districts), geographic proximity of students in a nearby

district (4 districts), and the use of Open Enrollment instead of a different type of agreement previously used (e.g., a pairing agreement expired, and Open Enrollment was used in its place). One district declared itself closed due to lack of space, so students used Open Enrollment to attend school elsewhere. The variety of reasons' cited reinforced our survey finding that a wide array of student and family preferences influence decisions to use Open Enrollment, and these reasons may or may not be based on a district's academic programming.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our findings are mixed regarding the validity of the supply and demand theory of educational choice. The claim that interdistrict choice options like Open Enrollment stimulate schools and school districts to change or improve their programming to meet the demands of consumers remains in question. While some evidence suggests that Open Enrollment motivates administrators of districts that lose students to strive to improve their school programs, other evidence suggests that Open Enrollment is not the causative factor in program improvement, at least in the view of administrators we surveyed. Further, in some districts where Open Enrollment should, in theory, stimulate improvement, it forced actions such as staff layoffs and the cancellation of programs or services. In a few cases, administrators said Open Enrollment caused or hastened the district's closing.

Should use of the Open Enrollment Option in Minnesota continue to increase as it has in recent years (Colopy & Tarr, 1994), its role as an agent of school change or improvement may become more conclusive. It is also possible, however, that if use of several other Minnesota choice options also continues to grow (e.g., public charter schools, school board agreements, postsecondary enrollment options, high school graduation incentives), distinctions between the effects of each type of option as compared to the effects of school choice in general may become clouded. Future research efforts may need to consider the entire array of choice options available and their combined effects on school change.

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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

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Sample Selection

To select the school districts in each strata (high impact gainers, high impact losers, and comparison districts), we used a Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) data base that contains a head count of students, by district, who used the Open Enrollment option to enroll in a district other than the district where they reside. For each district, it contains the number of students using Open Enrollment to enter the district and the number using the option to exit the district. At the time of sample selection, the database was current to the end of the 1990-91 school year. Head count data for the 1991-92 school year were not available from MDE until well after we began telephone interviews with districts.

Using this Open Enrollment database and another containing total district enrollments in Minnesota, we selected three groups of districts:

- **High impact gainers**--all districts where 50 or more students entered and/or there was a net increase of 5 percent or more in enrollment due to Open Enrollment during the 1990-91 school year
- **High impact losers**--all districts where 50 or more students left and/or there was a net decrease of 5 percent or more in enrollment due to Open Enrollment during the 1990-91 school year
- **Low impact or comparison districts**--selected districts that experienced little or no net student movement (less than 1 percent of total enrollment) due to Open Enrollment during the 1990-91 school year

While districts were initially selected based on the use of Open Enrollment in 1990-91, districts provided us with 1991-92 data in response to most survey questions. Thus, our analyses are based on districts with at least two years of experience with Open Enrollment and possibly up to five years of experience in the case of districts that had voluntarily participated in the option prior to statewide implementation. Theoretically, particular districts could have had a substantially different experience with Open Enrollment in 1991-92 than in 1990-91. In fact the great majority of those in our sample did not. Of those districts whose status changed and for which we have accurate data on the number of students entering and leaving in both years, only one district changed from one high impact category to another (e.g., losing to gaining or gaining to losing). The other eight districts

experienced more subtle changes (to or from low-impact status). These data should therefore be a fairly accurate reflection of the opinions and experiences of high impact gaining and losing districts over a minimum of two years.

The definitions of high impact districts that we use are consistent with prior research on the enrollment impacts of Open Enrollment conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as analysis conducted by the Minnesota House of Representatives Research Department during the 1989-90 school year. These definitions reflect the fact that the vast majority of districts in the state of Minnesota experienced either no change in enrollment or less than a 1 percent gain or loss in enrollment due to use of the Open Enrollment option during 1989-90 and 1990-91. Defining high impact as either at least a 5 percent change or 50 or more students entering or leaving is important in a state with a preponderance of small districts but a high proportion of total state school enrollment in urban and suburban areas.

We included all districts meeting the definitions of high impact gainers (a total of 26) and high impact losers (a total of 33). At the advice of the study's panel of experts, we selected 32 low impact districts based on two additional criteria: (1) proximity to a high impact district (not more than three district lines away) and (2) enrollment roughly comparable to a nearby high impact district (falling within standard enrollment ranges used by the National Center of Education Statistics to report school district data--e.g., 1 to 299, 300 to 599, etc.). About half of the low impact districts were matched to high impact "gainers" on geographic proximity and enrollment, and half to high impact "losers." This design may shed light on why, given similar district size and accessibility, some districts are more or less desirable to families in the area.

Out of a total of 91 districts in the sample, 85 districts participated and six refused. Most of the refusals were because administrative offices had too much to do and too little time -- they were just "too busy." The completed interviews fall into the following strata[a]:

High Impact Gainers	22
High Impact Losers	28
Low impact districts	34

[a] We could not classify one of the 85 districts as a gaining, losing, or comparison district due to missing data. Thus, the total number of districts in the analyses by strata equals 84.

Cautionary Note

One should note that the definitions of high impact gaining versus losing districts are not completely discrete, and this could affect analysis of the impacts of Open Enrollment. For example, most districts experienced student movement through Open Enrollment in both directions (into as well as out of the district). Once MDE data for 1990-91 were verified or corrected, a total of eight high impact districts in our sample had 50 or more students enter and 50 or more students leave using Open Enrollment. These districts were classified as either gaining or losing depending on whether they had more students enter than leave (a gaining district) or more students leave than enter (a losing district). However, if a particular group of districts (gaining, losing or comparison) did not appear to react to Open Enrollment as one might expect, part of the reason may be due to the mitigating effects of student movement through Open Enrollment in the other direction.

In addition, the data indicate that whether or not students are entering or leaving districts through the Open Enrollment option, nearly all districts experienced some degree (sometimes significant) of student movement through the use of other mechanisms, such as interdistrict student attendance agreements. The effect or lack of effect of Open Enrollment on education in these districts may reflect the role that Open Enrollment plays relative to other means for transferring students.

Data Collection

Districts in the sample received a letter from the Minnesota Department of Education underscoring the importance of the study and encouraging their participation. We then sent another letter requesting that districts prepare for the coming telephone interview by assembling certain data in advance and, if possible, sending these to us by either mail or facsimile. These data principally included facts and figures such as, for example, dollar amounts by budget category, numbers of students transferring in and out, and staff/pupil ratios. In most cases, districts complied with this request, and the actual telephone interviews generally lasted 20 to 35 minutes.

A small group of experienced interviewers conducted the surveys, calling respondents as many times as necessary to complete the interview. In most cases, we interviewed district superintendents, although sometimes he or she designated an administrative assistant, or in larger districts, research department staff.

APPENDIX B

DISTRICT SURVEYS

MINNESOTA OPEN ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Telephone Survey of High Impact Gaining Districts

Case ID _____

Name of School District: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

Title: _____

Telephone: ( ) _____

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOU START:

1. Number of students who enrolled in the district in:

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

2. Number of students who left the district in:

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is _____ from Policy Studies Associates. We are working with the U.S. Department of Education to study the effects of Open Enrollment in Minnesota. We are currently in the third year of the study.

Recently, we sent you a letter about this study, did you receive it?

[IF YES, CONTINUE INTRODUCTION]
[IF NO, SAY:] We can either fax you the letter today, or, if you do not have a fax machine, we will mail you the letter and call back in one week.

The purpose of this phone call is to gather information about the effects of changes in enrollment patterns due to the statewide Open Enrollment option. Specifically, we are interested in trends in movement into and out of your district, the administrative effects on the central office, the short term economic consequences of open enrollment for your district, and school level effects. The interview will take about 30 minutes.

Your answers will be confidential and will not be reported in any way that can be identified with you or your district. All information will be reported in the aggregate.

Do you have time to talk with me now?

[IF NO, SET ANOTHER TIME TO CALL BACK. RECORD APPOINTMENT:

_____
Date Time

AND END PHONE CALL.

IF THIS IS A GOOD TIME, CONTINUE:]

OK, first I would like to ask you some questions about program participation.

A. PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

A-1a. According to the 1990-91 headcount provided by MDE, you had a total of [FILL IN]_____students enrolled in your district due to open enrollment. Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?_____

And how many students were enrolled in your district under open enrollment during this past school year (1991-92)? _____
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-1e. (PG. 4)]

A-1b. How many of these entering students are:

[NUMBER OF STUDENTS]

American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black, not of Hispanic origin
Hispanic, regardless of race
White, not of Hispanic origin

A-1c. To what factors would you attribute this movement into your district?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

A-1d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might enter your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students entered your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT]

		YES	NO
a.	A nearby district closed a school	45%	55%
	Your district offers:		
b.	schools located nearer to students' homes than their resident school,	82	18
c.	better or different academic programs,	77	23
d.	A different discipline policy,	18	82
e.	childcare, or an improved childcare program,	36	64
f.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	64	36
g.	better or newer facilities,	41	59
h.	more or different extracurricular activities,	36	64
i.	or transportation into the district.	41	55
j.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	32	68

[SKIP TO A-2a. (BOTTOM, PAGE 4)]

A-1e. [ASK ONLY IF "0" STUDENTS ENTERING DISTRICT] Has your district ever received Open Enrollment applications from students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes.....1

No.....2 [IF ANSWERED "NO," SKIP TO QUESTION A-2a.]

A-1f. [IF "YES", ASK:] And what was the result of the application(s)?

Number accepted and enrolled 1989-90_____
1990-91_____

Number accepted but never enrolled 1989-90_____
1990-91_____
1991-92_____

Number Rejected
[IF "0" SKIP TO Q. A-2a]

1989-90_____
1990-91_____
1991-92_____

Other [SPECIFY]_____
_____
_____

A-1g. [ASK ONLY IF DISTRICT REJECTED APPLICATIONS] And what were the reasons for the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a. District closed due to lack of available space _____
b. Grade levels closed due to lack of available space _____
c. Restrictions due to desegregation plan _____
d. Lack of available personnel _____
e. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____
_____

A-2a. According to information provided by MDE, in 1990-91, you had _____ students leave your district due to open enrollment. Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?_____

And how many students left your district under open enrollment in the past school year (1991-92)?

_____
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-3, (TOP, PG. 6)]

A-2b. And what is the ethnic or racial breakdown of the students leaving your district?

[NUMBER OF STUDENTS]

American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black, not of Hispanic origin
Hispanic, regardless of race
White, not of Hispanic origin

A2c. To what factors would you attribute this movement out of your district?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

A-2d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might leave your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students left your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT]

		YES	NO
a.	Your schools are overcrowded	6%	94%
b.	Your district is suffering a lack of public support	0	100
c.	District residents are concerned with discipline	0	100
	Other districts offer_____:		
d.	schools located nearer to students' homes,	50	50
e.	better or more extensive academic programs,	33	67
f.	childcare,	33	67
g.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	11	89
h.	better or newer facilities,	6	94
i.	more or better extracurricular activities	17	83
j.	transportation from our district to theirs.	11	89
k.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	6	94

_____

_____

[IF ZERO STUDENTS ENTERED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, (PAGE 7)]

A-3. Has your district rejected Open Enrollment applications of any students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes.....18%
No.....82 [IF ANSWERED "NO," SKIP TO QUESTION A-4]

A-3a. Which of the following were factors in the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a.	District closed due to lack of available space	25%
b.	Grade levels closed due to lack of available space	25
c.	Restrictions due to desegregation plan	0
d.	Lack of available personnel	0
e.	Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____	50

A-4. Has your district declared itself closed to future students transferring into your district under the Open Enrollment program?

Yes.....0% (SKIP TO A-5.)

No.....100

A-4a. Why will your district be closed?

a. Lack of space.....1
b. Other (SPECIFY)_____..2

A-5. [IF ZERO ENROLLED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, OTHERWISE ASK:] How many of the students enrolled in your district in 1991-92 using Open Enrollment are receiving services under the following Federal categorical grants/entitlements? Please tell me the total number of Open Enrollment students receiving services, and then the number of minority Open Enrollment students receiving services. (IF NONE, WRITE IN "0")

		Avg. TOTAL	MINORITY
a.	Chapter 1/Compensatory Education	6.0	0.5
b.	Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA)	1.8	0.1
c.	Free or reduced price lunch/breakfast	16.5	1.1
d.	Title VII (bilingual education)	0.3	0.3
e.	Other	0.1	0

A-6. Has the Open Enrollment program impacted these services to students?

Yes..... 23%
No..... 73 [SKIP TO SECTION B]
DK..... 4 [SKIP TO SECTION B]

A-6a. And how has Open Enrollment impacted these services?

_____
_____
_____
_____

A-6b. [IF NOT OBVIOUS] Would you consider these impacts positive or negative?

Positive.....	80%
Negative.....	20

B. Consumer Information

Now I would like to ask you some questions concerning the dissemination of Open Enrollment information in your district.

B-1. Has your district made an effort to disseminate information related to Open Enrollment, such as providing information on Open Enrollment to district families?

Yes.....	91%
No.....	9 [IF ANSWER "NO," "N/A," OR "DK," THEN SKIP TO SECTION B-6]

B-2. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

Information on:	YES	NO
a. the availability of the Open Enrollment option.....	100%	0%
b. the name of a contact person if families are interested in the Open Enrollment option.....	100	0
c. the application process.....	80	20
d. ideas on how to make choices.....	55	45
e. Other (SPECIFY)_____..	30	70

_____
_____

B-3. How is information on the Open Enrollment program disseminated? Do you provide information through:

		Yes	No
a.	School newsletters or newspapers?	60%	40%
b.	School-sponsored informational meetings?	15	85
c.	Special districtwide mailing just on Open Enrollment?	0	100
d.	District newsletters, brochures, or fliers?	85	15
e.	Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)?	75	25
f.	Video?	10	90
g.	Through real estate agents?	40	60
h.	Through some other mechanism?	20	80

[PLEASE SPECIFY] _____

_____

B-4. To whom do you disseminate this information? Do you target:
[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

		YES	NO
a.	All families in your district	90%	10%
b.	Particular subset of families in your district	10	90
	(SPECIFY)_____		
c.	Families in other districts	30	70
d.	School Personnel	50	50
e.	Other._____	10	90

_____

B-5. In what month(s) do you distribute this information?

_____

B-6. Has the Open Enrollment option caused your district to disseminate more information on your district's schools and programs than you did in the past? (PLEASE CHECK ONE)

Yes	27%
No	68 [SKIP TO B-8]
DK	05 [SKIP TO B-8]

[IF YES, ASK:] Are you disseminating more information within your district, in other districts, or have you increased the available information both inside and outside your district?

a.	Providing more information within your district	33%
b.	Providing more information outside your district	0
c.	Providing more information both within and outside your district	67

B-7. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

		YES	NO
a.	schools in your district	100%	0%
b.	graduation rates of different schools	17	83
c.	information on student test scores or grades at specific schools	17	83
d.	advanced placement courses offered at specific schools	50	50
e.	extracurricular activities at different schools	67	33
f.	child care in your district	17	83
g.	transportation to or from your district	33	67
h.	Other (Specify)_____	17	83

B-8. About what percent of the families who transfer out of your district seek exit interviews?

C. Program Administration

C-1. Please provide exact figures for the following budget lines for the 1989-90 and 1991-92 school years.

	1989-90	1991-92
Total Budget		
Special Education Funds		
Transportation Funds		
General Education Foundation Aids		
Capital Expenditures		

C-1a. [IF NO CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED, SKIP TO C-2, OTHERWISE ASK:] To what do you attribute these changes?_____

C-1b. [IF OPEN ENROLLMENT IS NOT MENTIONED IN C-1a, ASK:] Do you attribute any of these changes in your budget directly to the Open Enrollment option?

Yes 11% No 89%

[COMMENTS:] _____

C-2. Has the Open Enrollment program resulted in an increase or decrease in administrative paperwork for your district?

Large increase.....	27%
Small increase.....	50
No Change.....	23
Decrease.....	0

C-3. Does your district accept or enroll Open Enrollment students from other districts after the January 1st deadline suggested by the state?

Yes.....	82%
No.....	14
DK.....	4

C-3a. Do students enter your district throughout the year under other mechanisms such as interdistrict agreements?

Yes..... 86%	No..... 14%	DK.....
(ASK Q. C-3b)	(SKIP TO Q. D-1)	(SKIP TO Q. D-1)

C-3b. [IF YES, ASK:] How many students entered your district in 1991-92 under these other mechanisms?

C-3c. Why do students use these other mechanisms instead of the Open Enrollment Option to enter your district?

_____

_____

_____

_____

D. IMPACT OF OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-1. Did you have a positive or negative attitude toward the Open Enrollment option before it was implemented in the 1989-90 school year?

Very Positive	27%
Somewhat Positive	32
Somewhat Negative	14
Very Negative	14
I had not formed an opinion	14

D-2. Has your attitude toward the Open Enrollment option changed since it was implemented?

a. Yes, I have a more positive attitude toward the option. 41%

b. Yes, I have a more negative attitude toward the option. 5

c. No change 54

[IF ANSWERED "a." OR "b.", ASK:] What outcomes have made you more [POSITIVE/NEGATIVE] about open enrollment?

_____

_____

_____

_____

D-3. Has your district taken steps specifically designed to either draw students into this district or to discourage students from leaving?

Yes	5%
No	95 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]
Dk	9 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]

D-3a. [IF "YES", ASK:] Did you take these steps primarily to draw new students into your district, or to discourage resident students from leaving?

Draw new students	1	
Discourage students from leaving	2	
Both	3	100%

D-4. Now I will read you a list of actions you might have taken. Please tell me if your district has taken this action, and whether you felt the step was very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective in drawing new students into the district or discouraging students from leaving.

ACTIONS	TAKE THIS ACTION?	HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE ACTION?
Instituted a specialized curriculum? (for example, one or more magnet programs, or a gifted and talented program) SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 No...2 ✓ n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2 Not.....3 n=0
Expanded course offerings? (for example, Advanced Placement courses or upper level math or science courses)	Yes..1 ✓ No...2 n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2✓ Not.....3 n=1
Increased extracurricular activities? SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 No...2 ✓ n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2 Not.....3 n=0
Added more counseling and support services? SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 No...2 ✓ n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2 Not.....3 n=0
Implemented/expanded a child care program?	Yes..1 No...2 ✓ n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2 Not.....3 n=0
Made physical plant improvements? SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 No...2 ✓ n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2 Not.....3 n=0
Made special transportation arrangements (such as transport students across district lines)? SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 ✓ No...2 n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2✓ Not.....3 n=1
Or some other action SPECIFY_____	Yes..1 ✓ No...2 n=1	Very.....1 Somewhat..2✓ Not.....3 n=1

D-5. In your opinion, in your district, what is the **PRIMARY** reason that motivates families to use the Open Enrollment option? (CHECK ONLY ONE IN EACH COLUMN) **ALLOW THE RESPONDENT TO ANSWER BEFORE PROBING FOR A RESPONSE**

At the: Elementary School Level		And at the: Secondary School Level	
Better or different academic program	18%	Better or different academic program	32%
Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	5	Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	5
More extracurricular activities	0	More extracurricular activities	9
Geography	50	Geography	27
Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	0	Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	4
A fresh start	5	A fresh start	14
Child care	14		
Other (SPECIFY)_____	9	Other (SPECIFY)_____	9
DK	0	DK	0

Theoretically, parental choice might influence a variety of changes at the district and school levels. The following questions are designed to obtain your assessment of the impact of Open Enrollment so far.

D-6. Has the Open Enrollment program lead your district to initiate cooperative arrangements such as:

		YES	NO
a.	Distance learning	5%	95%
b.	Traveling teachers	5	95
c.	Offering more courses due to school cooperation	9	91
d.	Other (SPECIFY)_____	9	91

REFER TO THE BOTTOM OF P.2. AND BOTTOM OF P.4. TO DETERMINE NET GAIN OR LOSS DUE TO OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-7a. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH A NET GAIN IN STUDENTS]** Has the increase in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO
a.	Built a new school	10%	90%
b.	Hired more teachers (Number_____)	57	43
c.	Hired other staff	43	57
	(SPECIFY)_____		
d.	Added academic courses	19	81
	(SPECIFY)_____		
e.	Added any extracurricular activities	5	95
	(SPECIFY)_____		
f.	Added any student support services	19	81
	(SPECIFY)_____		
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	10	90
	(SPECIFY)_____		
	_____		
	_____		

D-7b. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH NET LOSS IN STUDENTS]** Has the decrease in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO
a.	Closed a school	1	2
b.	Laid-off teachers	1	2
c.	Laid-off other staff (Number_____)	1	2
	(SPECIFY)_____		
d.	Canceled any courses	1	2
	(SPECIFY)_____		
e.	Canceled any extracurricular activities	1	2
	(SPECIFY)_____		
f.	Canceled any student support services	1	2
	(SPECIFY)_____		
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	1	2
	(SPECIFY)_____		
	_____		
	_____		

D-8. People wonder whether parental and student choice options such as Minnesota's Open Enrollment program, the Postsecondary Education Options program, and the High School Graduation Incentives program will have impacts on educational quality and equality among school districts. I'm going to mention some indicators that are often used by districts to compare their current performance with previous years. First, I would like you to tell me if your district has noticed any change in the indicator in recent years. Then I'll ask you about the direction and magnitude of the change. Finally, I'd like you to consider whether some or all of the change can be attributed to any of the choice options implemented by the state or whether the cause lies elsewhere.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
INDICATOR	WHAT WAS THE DIRECTION OF THE CHANGE:	(IF CHANGE) PLEASE GIVE EVIDENCE OF THIS CHANGE:	TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THIS CHANGE:
a1. Student-teacher ratio in elementary schools	No Change 27% Higher...32 Lower....36 DK 5	Ratio in 1988-1989: Ratio in 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....40% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....7 OTHER_____53
a2. Student-teacher ratio in secondary schools	No Change 41% Higher...36 Lower....14 n/s 5 DK 5	Ratio in 1988-1989: Ratio in 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....36% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____63
b. Return of dropouts to school	No Change 64% More.....18 Fewer.... 0 n/s 9 DK 9	% of dropouts returning: school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
c. Advanced Placement Classes	No Change 68% More.....23 Fewer.... 0 n/s 9	Classes in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.... 20% PSEO.....40 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____40

d. Higher level math and science courses	No Change 77% More.....14 Fewer.... 0 n/s 9	Courses in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....33% PSEO..... 0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____67
e. Magnet or specialty programs (SPECIFY NAMES) (1)_____ (2)_____	No Change 77% More....18 Fewer... 0 n/s 5	Programs in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.... 25% PSEO.....25 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____50
f. Number of student counselors	No Change 64 More.....32 Fewer.....5	Counselors in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....25% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____38
g. High school Electives	No Change 36 More.....41 Fewer.....5 n/s 9 DK 9	Added or subtracted _____ courses since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....20% PSEO.....10 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____60
h. Extra-curricular offerings (SPECIFY) (1)_____ (2)_____	No Change 50 More.....36 Fewer.....5 n/s 9	Added or subtracted _____ activities since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100

D-9. And finally, are there any additional issues, strengths, or drawbacks of the Minnesota Open Enrollment policy that you would like to discuss?

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

MINNESOTA OPEN ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Telephone Survey of High Impact Losing Districts

Case ID _____

Name of School District: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

Title: _____

Telephone: ( ) _____ ____

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOU START:

1. Number of students who enrolled in the district in:

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

2. Number of students who left the district in:

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is _____ from Policy Studies Associates. We are working with the U.S. Department of Education to study the effects of Open Enrollment in Minnesota. We are currently in the third year of the study.

Recently, we sent you a letter about this study, did you receive it?

[IF YES, CONTINUE INTRODUCTION]
[IF NO, SAY:] We can either fax you the letter today, or, if you do not have a fax machine, we will mail you the letter and call back in one week.

The purpose of this phone call is to gather information about the effects of changes in enrollment patterns due to the statewide Open Enrollment option. Specifically, we are interested in trends in movement into and out of your district, the administrative effects on the central office, the short term economic consequences of open enrollment for your district, and school level effects. The interview will take about 30 minutes.

Your answers will be confidential and will not be reported in any way that can be identified with you or your district. All information will be reported in the aggregate.

Do you have time to talk with me now?

[IF NO, SET ANOTHER TIME TO CALL BACK. RECORD APPOINTMENT:

_____
Date Time

AND END PHONE CALL.

IF THIS IS A GOOD TIME, CONTINUE:]

OK, first I would like to ask you some questions about program participation.

A. PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

A-1a. According to the 1990-91 headcount provided by MDE, you had a total of [FILL IN]_____ students enrolled in your district due to open enrollment. Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?

And how many students were enrolled in your district under open enrollment during this past school year (1991-92)?
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-1e. (PG. 4)]

A-1b. How many of these entering students are:

[NUMBER OF STUDENTS]

American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black, not of Hispanic origin
Hispanic, regardless of race
White, not of Hispanic origin

A-1c. To what factors would you attribute this movement into your district?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

A-1d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might enter your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students entered your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT]

		YES	NO
a.	A nearby district closed a school	14%	86%
	Your district offers:		
b.	schools located nearer to students' homes than their resident school,	64	36
c.	better or different academic programs,	64	36
d.	A different discipline policy,	18	77
e.	childcare, or an improved childcare program,	46	54
f.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	55	45
g.	better or never facilities,	36	64
h.	more or different extracurricular activities,	41	59
i.	or transportation into the district.	18	82
j.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	18	82

_____

_____

[SKIP TO A-2a. (BOTTOM, PAGE 4)]

A-1e. [ASK ONLY IF "0" STUDENTS ENTERING DISTRICT] Has your district ever received Open Enrollment applications from students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes..... 0%

No..... 100 [IF ANSWERED "NO," SKIP TO QUESTION A-2a.]

A-1f. [IF "YES", ASK:] And what was the result of the application(s)?

Number accepted and enrolled 1989-90_____
1990-91_____

Number accepted but never enrolled 1989-90_____
1990-91_____
1991-92_____

Number Rejected 1989-90_____
[IF "0" SKIP TO Q. A-2a] 1990-91_____
1991-92_____

Other [SPECIFY]_____

A-1g. [ASK ONLY IF DISTRICT REJECTED APPLICATIONS] And what were the reasons for the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a. District closed due to lack of available space _____
b. Grade levels closed due to lack of available space _____
c. Restrictions due to desegregation plan _____
d. Lack of available personnel _____
e. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

A-2a. According to information provided by MDE, in 1990-91, you had_____ students leave your district due to open enrollment.
Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?

And how many students left your district under open enrollment in the past school year (1991-92)?

_____
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-3, (TOP, PG. 6)]

A-2b. And what is the ethnic or racial breakdown of the students leaving your district?

[NUMBER OF STUDENTS]

American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black, not of Hispanic origin
Hispanic, regardless of race
White, not of Hispanic origin

A2c. To what factors would you attribute this movement out of your district?

A-2d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might leave your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students left your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT] n=27

		YES	NO
a.	Your schools are overcrowded	30%	70%
b.	Your district is suffering a lack of public support	15	85
c.	District residents are concerned with discipline	19	82
	Other districts offer_____:		
d.	schools located nearer to students' homes,	93	7
e.	better or more extensive academic programs,	52	48
f.	childcare,	44	52
g.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	26	74
h.	better or newer facilities,	15	85
i.	more or better extracurricular activities	26	74
j.	transportation from our district to theirs.	22	74
k.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	19	81

_____

_____

[IF ZERO STUDENTS ENTERED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, (PAGE 7)]

A-3. Has your district rejected Open Enrollment applications of any students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes.....	46%	
No.....	50	[IF ANSWERED "NO,"
DK.....	4	SKIP TO QUESTION A-4]

A-3a. Which of the following were factors in the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a.	District closed due to lack of available space	0%
b.	Grade levels closed due to lack of available space	60
c.	Restrictions due to desegregation plan	10
d.	Lack of available personnel	10
e.	Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____	70

_____

A-4. Has your district declared itself closed to future students transferring into your district under the Open Enrollment program?

Yes.....	0%	(SKIP TO A-5.)
No.....	100	

A-4a. Why will your district be closed?

a. Lack of space.....1
b. Other (SPECIFY)_____..2

_____

_____

A-5. [IF ZERO ENROLLED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, OTHERWISE ASK:] How many of the students enrolled in your district in 1991-92 using Open Enrollment are receiving services under the following Federal categorical grants/entitlements? Please tell me the total number of Open Enrollment students receiving services, and then the number of minority Open Enrollment students receiving services. (IF NONE, WRITE IN "0")

	TOTAL	MINORITY
a. Chapter 1/Compensatory Education		
b. Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA)		
c. Free or reduced price lunch/breakfast		
d. Title VII (bilingual education)		
e. Other		

A-6. Has the Open Enrollment program impacted these services to students?

Yes..... 0%
No..... 91 [SKIP TO SECTION B]
DK..... 9 [SKIP TO SECTION B]

A-6a. And how has Open Enrollment impacted these services?

_____

_____

_____

_____

A-6b. [IF NOT OBVIOUS] Would you consider these impacts positive or negative?

Positive.....1
Negative.....2

B. Consumer Information

Now I would like to ask you some questions concerning the dissemination of Open Enrollment information in your district.

B-1. Has your district made an effort to disseminate information related to Open Enrollment, such as providing information on Open Enrollment to district families?

Yes..... 86%

No..... 14 [IF ANSWER "NO," "N/A," OR "DK," THEN SKIP TO SECTION B-6]

B-2. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

Information on:	YES	NO
a. the availability of the Open Enrollment option	100%	0%
b. the name of a contact person if families are interested in the Open Enrollment option	96	4
c. the application process	83	17
d. ideas on how to make choices	58	42
e. Other (SPECIFY)_____	29	71

_____

_____

B-3. How is information on the Open Enrollment program disseminated? Do you provide information through:

		Yes	No	DK
a.	School newsletters or newspapers?	54%	38%	8%
b.	School-sponsored informational meetings?	29	67	0
c.	Special districtwide mailing just on Open Enrollment?	17	83	0
d.	District newsletters, brochures, or fliers?	88	12	0
e.	Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)?	71	29	0
f.	Video?	0	100	0
g.	Through real estate agents?	42	58	0
h.	Through some other mechanism?	25	75	0

[PLEASE SPECIFY] _____

_____

B-4. To whom do you disseminate this information? Do you target:
[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

		YES	NO
a.	All families in your district	92%	8%
b.	Particular subset of families in your district	13	87
	(SPECIFY)_____		
c.	Families in other districts	8	92
d.	School Personnel	46	54
e.	Other._____	17	83

_____

B-5. In what month(s) do you distribute this information?

_____

B-6. Has the Open Enrollment option caused your district to disseminate more information on your district's schools and programs than you did in the past? (PLEASE CHECK ONE)

Yes	36%	
No	64	[SKIP TO B-8]
DK	0	[SKIP TO B-8]

[IF YES, ASK:] Are you disseminating more information within your district, in other districts, or have you increased the available information both inside and outside your district?

a.	Providing more information within your district	30%
b.	Providing more information outside your district	10
c.	Providing more information both within and outside your district	60

B-7. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

		YES	NO
a.	schools in your district	100%	0%
b.	graduation rates of different schools	20	80
c.	information on student test scores or grades at specific schools	30	70
d.	advanced placement courses offered at specific schools	60	40
e.	extracurricular activities at different schools	70	30
f.	child care in your district	50	50
g.	transportation to or from your district	50	50
h.	Other (Specify)_____	80	20

B-8. About what percent of the families who transfer out of your district seek exit interviews?

C. Program Administration

C-1. Please provide exact figures for the following budget lines for the 1989-90 and 1991-92 school years.

	1989-90	1991-92
Total Budget		
Special Education Funds		
Transportation Funds		
General Education Foundation Aids		
Capital Expenditures		

C-1a. [IF NO CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED, SKIP TO C-2, OTHERWISE ASK:] To what do you attribute these changes?_____

C-1b. [IF OPEN ENROLLMENT IS NOT MENTIONED IN C-1a, ASK:] Do you attribute any of these changes in your budget directly to the Open Enrollment option?

Yes 32% No 68%

[COMMENTS:] _____

C-2. Has the Open Enrollment program resulted in an increase or decrease in administrative paperwork for your district?

Large increase	1	50%
Small increase	2	36
No Change	3	14
Decrease	4	0

C-3. Does your district accept or enroll Open Enrollment students from other districts after the January 1st deadline suggested by the state?

Yes	79%
No	21

C-3a. Do students enter your district throughout the year under other mechanisms such as interdistrict agreements?

Yes.....71%	No.....29%	DK.....0%
(ASK Q. C-3b)	(SKIP TO Q. D-1)	(SKIP TO Q. D-1)

C-3b. [IF YES, ASK:] How many students entered your district in 1991-92 under these other mechanisms?

C-3c. Why do students use these other mechanisms instead of the Open Enrollment Option to enter your district?

_____

_____

_____

_____

D. IMPACT OF OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-1. Did you have a positive or negative attitude toward the Open Enrollment option before it was implemented in the 1989-90 school year?

Very Positive.....18%
Somewhat Positive.....29%
Somewhat Negative.....25%
Very Negative.....18%
I had not formed an opinion..11%

D-2. Has your attitude toward the Open Enrollment option changed since it was implemented?

a. Yes, I have a more positive attitude toward the option. 39%

b. Yes, I have a more negative attitude toward the option. 18

c. No change 43

[IF ANSWERED "a." OR "b.", ASK:] What outcomes have made you more [POSITIVE/NEGATIVE] about open enrollment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

D-3. Has your district taken steps specifically designed to either draw students into this district or to discourage students from leaving? n=28

Yes.....43%
No.....57 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]
Dk..... 0 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]

D-3a. [IF "YES", ASK:] Did you take these steps primarily to draw new students into your district, or to discourage resident students from leaving? n=12

Draw new students.....25%
Discourage students from leaving.....42
Both.....25
DK..... 8

D-4. Now I will read you a list of actions you might have taken. Please tell me if your district has taken this action, and whether you felt the step was very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective in drawing new students into the district or discouraging students from leaving. n=16

ACTIONS	TAKE THIS ACTION?	HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE ACTION?
Instituted a specialized curriculum? (for example, one or more magnet programs, or a gifted and talented program) SPECIFY_____	Yes..0% No...92 DK... 8	Very.....0% Somewhat..0 Not.....0
Expanded course offerings? (for example, Advanced Placement courses or upper level math or science courses)	Yes..58% No...33 DK... 8	Very.....0% Somewhat.100 Not.....0
Increased extracurricular activities? SPECIFY_____	Yes..33% No...58 DK... 8	Very.....25% Somewhat.75 Not.....0
Added more counseling and support services? SPECIFY_____	Yes..25% No...68 DK... 8	Very.....33% Somewhat 0 Not.....67
Implemented/expanded a child care program?	Yes..42% No...50 DK....8	Very.....50% Somewhat..0 Not.....0 DK..... 50
Made physical plant improvements? SPECIFY_____	Yes..42% No...50 DK... 8	Very.....60% Somewhat 20 Not.....20
Made special transportation arrangements (such as transport students across district lines)? SPECIFY_____	Yes..42% No...50 DK... 8	Very.....20% Somewhat 80 Not.....0
Or some other action SPECIFY_____	Yes..58% No...33 DK... 8	Very.....14% Somewhat 57 Not.....2 DK..... 29

D-5. In your opinion, in your district, what is the **PRIMARY** reason that motivates families to use the Open Enrollment option? (CHECK ONLY ONE IN EACH COLUMN) **ALLOW THE RESPONDENT TO ANSWER BEFORE PROBING FOR A RESPONSE**

At the: Elementary School Level		And at the: Secondary School Level	
Better or different academic program	71%	Better or different academic program	14%
Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	4	Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	7
More extracurricular activities	0	More extracurricular activities	4
Geography	46	Geography	25
Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	11	Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	14
A fresh start	0	A fresh start	4
Child care	18		
Other (SPECIFY)_____	7	Other (SPECIFY)_____	4
DK_____	4	DK_____	14
DK _____(99)		DK _____(99)	

Theoretically, parental choice might influence a variety of changes at the district and school levels. The following questions are designed to obtain your assessment of the impact of Open Enrollment so far.

D-6. Has the Open Enrollment program lead your district to initiate cooperative arrangements such as:

		YES	NO
a.	Distance learning	11%	89%
b.	Traveling teachers	11	89
c.	Offering more courses due to school cooperation	18	82
d.	Other (SPECIFY)_____	18	82

REFER TO THE BOTTOM OF P.2. AND BOTTOM OF P.4. TO DETERMINE NET GAIN OR LOSS DUE TO OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-7a. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH A NET GAIN IN STUDENTS]** Has the increase in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO	DK
a.	Built a new school	0%	67%	33%
b.	Hired more teachers (Number_____)	33	33	33
c.	Hired other staff	33	33	33
	(SPECIFY)_____			
d.	Added academic courses	0	67	33
	(SPECIFY)_____			
e.	Added any extracurricular activities	0	67	33
	(SPECIFY)_____			
f.	Added any student support services	0	67	33
	(SPECIFY)_____			
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	0	67	33
	(SPECIFY)_____			
	_____			
	_____			

D-7b. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH NET LOSS IN STUDENTS]** Has the decrease in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO
a.	Closed a school	12%	88%
b.	Laid-off teachers	32	68
c.	Laid-off other staff (Number_____)	32	68
	(SPECIFY)_____		
d.	Canceled any courses	24	76
	(SPECIFY)_____		
e.	Canceled any extracurricular activities	8	92
	(SPECIFY)_____		
f.	Canceled any student support services	8	92
	(SPECIFY)_____		
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	20	80
	(SPECIFY)_____		
	_____		
	_____		

D-8. People wonder whether parental and student choice options such as Minnesota's Open Enrollment program, the Postsecondary Education Options program, and the High School Graduation Incentives program will have impacts on educational quality and equality among school districts. I'm going to mention some indicators that are often used by districts to compare their current performance with previous years. First, I would like you to tell me if your district has noticed any change in the indicator in recent years. Then I'll ask you about the direction and magnitude of the change. Finally, I'd like you to consider whether some or all of the change can be attributed to any of the choice options implemented by the state or whether the cause lies elsewhere.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
INDICATOR	**WHAT WAS THE DIRECTION OF THE CHANGE:**	**(IF CHANGE) PLEASE GIVE EVIDENCE OF THIS CHANGE:**	**TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THIS CHANGE:**
a1. Student-teacher ratio in elementary schools	No Change..39% Higher..21 Lower...29 DK..... 11	Ratio in 1988-1989: Ratio in 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....42% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____58
2. Student-teacher ratio in secondary schools	No Change..29 Higher..32 Lower...11 n/s.....14 DK.....14	Ratio in 1988-1989: Ratio in 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....17% PSEO..... 0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____83
b. Return of dropouts to school	No Change..36% More.... 7 Fewer...11 n/s.....14 DK.....32	% of dropouts returning: school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
c. Advanced Placement Classes	No Change..36% More....32 Fewer....7 n/s.....18 DK.....7	Classes in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....18 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____82

d. Higher level math and science courses	No Change..36% More....32 Fewer....7 n/s.....18 DK.....7	Courses in school years 1988-89 1991-92	Open Enrollment.....9% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____91
e. Magnet or specialty programs (SPECIFY NAMES) (1)_____ _____ (2)_____ _____	No Change..64% More....11 Fewer....0 n/s.....14 DK.....11	Programs in school years 1988-89_____ 1991-92_____	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
f. Number of student counselors	No Change..64% More....18 Fewer....7 DK.....11	Counselors in school years 1988-89_____ 1991-92_____	Open Enrollment.....14% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____86
g. High school Electives	No Change..21% More....46 Fewer....7 n/s.....18 DK.....7	Added or subtracted _____ courses since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....13% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____87
h. Extra-curricular offerings (SPECIFY) (1)_____ _____ (2)_____ _____	No Change..43% More....43 Fewer....4 n/s.....4 DK.....7	Added or subtracted _____ activities since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....15% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____85

D-9. And finally, are there any additional issues, strengths, or drawbacks of the Minnesota Open Enrollment policy that you would like to discuss?

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

MINNESOTA OPEN ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Telephone Survey of Comparison Districts

Case ID _____

Name of School District: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

Title: _____

Telephone: ( ) _____

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOU START:

1. **Number of students who enrolled in the district in:**

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

2. **Number of students who left the district in:**

   1989-90_____ 1990-91_____

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is _____ from Policy Studies Associates. We are working with the U.S. Department of Education to study the effects of Open Enrollment in Minnesota. We are currently in the third year of the study.

Recently, we sent you a letter about this study, did you receive it?

[IF YES, CONTINUE INTRODUCTION]
[IF NO, SAY:] We can either fax you the letter today, or, if you do not have a fax machine, we will mail you the letter and call back in one week.

The purpose of this phone call is to gather information about the effects of changes in enrollment patterns due to the statewide Open Enrollment option. Specifically, we are interested in trends in movement into and out of your district, the administrative effects on the central office, the short term economic consequences of open enrollment for your district, and school level effects. The interview will take about 30 minutes.

Your answers will be confidential and will not be reported in any way that can be identified with you or your district. All information will be reported in the aggregate.

Do you have time to talk with me now?

[IF NO, SET ANOTHER TIME TO CALL BACK. RECORD APPOINTMENT:

_____
Date Time

AND END PHONE CALL.

IF THIS IS A GOOD TIME, CONTINUE:]

OK, first I would like to ask you some questions about program participation.

A. PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

A-1a. According to the 1990-91 headcount provided by MDE, you had a total of [FILL IN]_____ students enrolled in your district due to open enrollment. Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?

And how many students were enrolled in your district under open enrollment during this past school year (1991-92)?
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-1e. (PG. 4)]

A-1b. How many of these entering students are:

[NUMBER OF STUDENTS]
Avg.

American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian or Pacific Islander
Black, not of Hispanic origin
Hispanic, regardless of race
White, not of Hispanic origin

A-1c. To what factors would you attribute this movement into your district?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

A-1d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might enter your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students entered your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT] n=32

		YES	NO
a.	A nearby district closed a school	16%	84%
	Your district offers:		
b.	schools located nearer to students' homes than their resident school,	63	37
c.	better or different academic programs,	63	37
d.	A different discipline policy,	18	82
e.	childcare, or an improved childcare program,	38	63
f.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	59	38
g.	better or newer facilities,	16	78
h.	more or different extracurricular activities,	22	78
i.	or transportation into the district.	22	78
j.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	19	81

[SKIP TO A-2a. (BOTTOM, PAGE 4)]

A-1e. [ASK ONLY IF "0" STUDENTS ENTERING DISTRICT] Has your district ever received Open Enrollment applications from students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes..... 50%

No..... 50 [IF ANSWERED "NO," SKIP TO QUESTION A-2a.]

A-1f. [IF "YES", ASK:] And what was the result of the application(s)?

Number accepted and enrolled	1989-90
	1990-91
Number accepted but never enrolled	1989-90
	1990-91
	1991-92

Number Rejected [IF "0" SKIP TO Q. A-2a]

1989-90
1990-91
1991-92

Other [SPECIFY]_____

_____

_____

A-1g. **[ASK ONLY IF DISTRICT REJECTED APPLICATIONS]** And what were the reasons for the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a. District closed due to lack of available space _____
b. Grade levels closed due to lack of available space _____
c. Restrictions due to desegregation plan _____
d. Lack of available personnel _____
e. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

_____

A-2a. According to information provided by MDE, in 1990-91, you had_____Avg students **leave** your district due to open enrollment.
Is this number correct?

Yes.....1
No.....2

[IF NO, ASK:] What is the correct number?

And how many students left your district under open enrollment in the past school year (1991-92)?

_____
[IF ZERO, SKIP TO A-3, (TOP, PG. 6)]

A-2b. And what is the ethnic or racial breakdown of the students leaving your district?

	[NUMBER OF STUDENTS] Avg
American Indian or Alaskan native	
Asian or Pacific Islander	
Black, not of Hispanic origin	
Hispanic, regardless of race	
White, not of Hispanic origin	

A2c. To what factors would you attribute this movement out of your district?

A-2d. Now I am going to read a list of other possible reasons why students might leave your district. For each, please tell me whether it was a reason students left your district. [IF REASON LISTED ABOVE, CHECK THE RESPONSE AND DO NOT REPEAT]

		YES	NO
a.	Your schools are overcrowded	0%	100%
b.	Your district is suffering a lack of public support	0	100
c.	District residents are concerned with discipline	7	90
	Other districts offer_____:		
d.	schools located nearer to students' homes,	73	27
e.	better or more extensive academic programs,	27	73
f.	childcare,	43	57
g.	smaller schools and/or smaller classes,	20	80
h.	better or newer facilities,	10	87
i.	more or better extracurricular activities	33	67
j.	transportation from our district to theirs.	10	87
k.	Is there anything else that has not been mentioned? (SPECIFY)	10	90

[IF ZERO STUDENTS ENTERED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, (PAGE 7)]

A-3. Has your district rejected Open Enrollment applications of any students wishing to attend a school in your district?

Yes..... 25%
No..... 75 [IF ANSWERED "NO," SKIP TO QUESTION A-4]

A-3a. Which of the following were factors in the rejection(s)? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

a.	District closed due to lack of available space	13%
b.	Grade levels closed due to lack of available space	38
c.	Restrictions due to desegregation plan	0
d.	Lack of available personnel	50
e.	Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____	63

A-4. Has your district declared itself closed to future students transferring into your district under the Open Enrollment program?

Yes.....3% (SKIP TO A-5.)

No.....97

A-4a. Why will your district be closed?

a.	Lack of space	100%
b.	Other (SPECIFY)_____	0

A-5. [IF ZERO ENROLLED UNDER OPEN ENROLLMENT IN 1991-92, SKIP TO SECTION B, OTHERWISE ASK:] How many of the students enrolled in your district in 1991-92 using Open Enrollment are receiving services under the following Federal categorical grants/entitlements? Please tell me the total number of Open Enrollment students receiving services, and then the number of minority Open Enrollment students receiving services. (IF NONE, WRITE IN "0")

		Avg. TOTAL	MINORITY
a.	Chapter 1/Compensatory Education	0.8	0.3
b.	Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA)	0.4	0
c.	Free or reduced price lunch/breakfast	1.8	0.3
d.	Title VII (bilingual education)	0	0
e.	Other	0.1	0

A-6. Has the Open Enrollment program impacted these services to students?

Yes.....	10%	
No.....	74	[SKIP TO SECTION B]
DK.....	16	[SKIP TO SECTION B]

A-6a. And how has Open Enrollment impacted these services?

A-6b. [IF NOT OBVIOUS] Would you consider these impacts positive or negative?

Positive	67%
Negative	0
DK	33

B. Consumer Information

Now I would like to ask you some questions concerning the dissemination of Open Enrollment information in your district.

B-1. Has your district made an effort to disseminate information related to Open Enrollment, such as providing information on Open Enrollment to district families?

Yes	100%	
No	0	[IF ANSWER "NO," "N/A," OR "DK," THEN SKIP TO SECTION B-6]

B-2. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

Information on:	YES	NO
a. the availability of the Open Enrollment option	97%	3%
b. the name of a contact person if families are interested in the Open Enrollment option	100	0
c. the application process	94	3
d. ideas on how to make choices	53	47
e. Other (SPECIFY)_____	47	53

_____

_____

B-3. How is information on the Open Enrollment program disseminated? Do you provide information through:

	Yes	No
a. School newsletters or newspapers?	59%	41%
b. School-sponsored informational meetings?	18	79
c. Special districtwide mailing just on Open Enrollment?	3	97
d. District newsletters, brochures, or fliers?	74	26
e. Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)?	77	21
f. Video?	3	97
g. Through real estate agents?	15	85
h. Through some other mechanism?	15	65

[PLEASE SPECIFY] _____

_____

B-4. To whom do you disseminate this information? Do you target:
[CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

		YES	NO
a.	All families in your district	74%	27%
b.	Particular subset of families in your district	21	79
	(SPECIFY)_____		
c.	Families in other districts	27	74
d.	School Personnel	50	50
e.	Other._____	12	88

B-5. In what month(s) do you distribute this information?

_____

B-6. Has the Open Enrollment option caused your district to disseminate more information on your district's schools and programs than you did in the past? (PLEASE CHECK ONE)

Yes	50%	
No	47	[SKIP TO B-8]
DK	3	[SKIP TO B-8]

[IF YES, ASK:] Are you disseminating more information within your district, in other districts, or have you increased the available information both inside and outside your district?

a.	Providing more information within your district	47%
b.	Providing more information outside your district	0
c.	Providing more information both within and outside your district	53

B-7. What topics are covered in the information you distribute?

		YES	NO
a.	schools in your district	88%	12%
b.	graduation rates of different schools	18	82
c.	information on student test scores or grades at specific schools	47	53
d.	advanced placement courses offered at specific schools	47	53
e.	extracurricular activities at different schools	65	35
f.	child care in your district	29	71
g.	transportation to or from your district	59	35
h.	Other (Specify)_____	65	35

B-8. About what percent of the families who transfer out of your district seek exit interviews?

C. Program Administration

C-1. Please provide exact figures for the following budget lines for the 1989-90 and 1991-92 school years.

	1989-90	1991-92
Total Budget		
Special Education Funds		
Transportation Funds		
General Education Foundation Aids		
Capital Expenditures		

C-1a. [IF NO CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED, SKIP TO C-2, OTHERWISE ASK:] To what do you attribute these changes?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

C-1b. [IF OPEN ENROLLMENT IS NOT MENTIONED IN C-1a, ASK:] Do you attribute any of these changes in your budget directly to the Open Enrollment option?

Yes 3% No 88% DK 9%

[COMMENTS:] _____

_____

C-2. Has the Open Enrollment program resulted in an increase or decrease in administrative paperwork for your district?

Large increase.....	18%
Small increase.....	56
No Change.....	27
Decrease.....	0

C-3. Does your district accept or enroll Open Enrollment students from other districts after the January 1st deadline suggested by the state?

Yes.....	59%
No.....	41

C-3a. Do students enter your district throughout the year under other mechanisms such as interdistrict agreements?

Yes.....85% No.....15% DK.....0

(ASK Q. C-3b) (SKIP TO Q. D-1) (SKIP TO Q. D-1)

C-3b. [IF YES, ASK:] How many students entered your district in 1991-92 under these other mechanisms?

C-3c. Why do students use these other mechanisms instead of the Open Enrollment Option to enter your district?

D. IMPACT OF OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-1. Did you have a positive or negative attitude toward the Open Enrollment option before it was implemented in the 1989-90 school year?

Very Positive.....21%
Somewhat Positive.....18%
Somewhat Negative.....38%
Very Negative..... 9%
I had not formed an opinion..15%

D-2. Has your attitude toward the Open Enrollment option changed since it was implemented?

a. Yes, I have a more positive attitude toward the option. 35%

b. Yes, I have a more negative attitude toward the option. 12

c. No change 53

[IF ANSWERED "a." OR "b.", ASK:] What outcomes have made you more [POSITIVE/NEGATIVE] about open enrollment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

D-3. Has your district taken steps specifically designed to either draw students into this district or to discourage students from leaving?

Yes.....29%
No.....71 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]
Dk..... 0 [SKIP TO QUESTION D-5]

D-3a. [IF "YES", ASK:] Did you take these steps primarily to draw new students into your district, or to discourage resident students from leaving?

Draw new students.....20%
Discourage students from leaving.....60
Both.....20

D-4. Now I will read you a list of actions you might have taken. Please tell me if your district has taken this action, and whether you felt the step was very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective in drawing new students into the district or discouraging students from leaving.

ACTIONS	TAKE THIS ACTION?	HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE ACTION?
Instituted a specialized curriculum? (for example, one or more magnet programs, or a gifted and talented program) SPECIFY_____	Yes..70% No...30	Very.....57% Somewhat.43 Not.....0
Expanded course offerings? (for example, Advanced Placement courses or upper level math or science courses)	Yes..70% No...30	Very.....86% Somewhat.14 Not.....0
Increased extracurricular activities? SPECIFY_____	Yes..40% No...60	Very.....25% Somewhat.75 Not.....0
Added more counseling and support services? SPECIFY_____	Yes..50% No...50	Very....100% Somewhat 0 Not..... 0
Implemented/expanded a child care program?	Yes.. 0% No..100	Very.....0% Somewhat 0 Not.....0
Made physical plant improvements? SPECIFY_____	Yes..30% No...70	Very.....33% Somewhat 0 Not..... 0 DK..... 67
Made special transportation arrangements (such as transport students across district lines)? SPECIFY_____	Yes..60% No...40	Very.....83% Somewhat 17 Not.....0
Or some other action SPECIFY_____	Yes..40% No...60	Very.....25% Somewhat 25 Not.....25 DK..... 25

D-5. In your opinion, in your district, what is the **PRIMARY** reason that motivates families to use the Open Enrollment option? (CHECK ONLY ONE IN EACH COLUMN) **ALLOW THE RESPONDENT TO ANSWER BEFORE PROBING FOR A RESPONSE**

At the: Elementary School Level		And at the: Secondary School Level	
Better or different academic program	12%	Better or different academic program	24%
Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	3	Other academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	9
More extracurricular activities	0	More extracurricular activities	3
Geography	62	Geography	38
Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	0	Other non-academic factors (SPECIFY)_____	6
A fresh start	0	A fresh start	3
Child care	12		
Other (SPECIFY)_____	3	Other (SPECIFY)_____	9
DK	3	DK	3

Theoretically, parental choice might influence a variety of changes at the district and school levels. The following questions are designed to obtain your assessment of the impact of Open Enrollment so far.

D-6. Has the Open Enrollment program lead your district to initiate cooperative arrangements such as:

		YES	NO
a.	Distance learning	18%	82%
b.	Traveling teachers	15	85
c.	Offering more courses due to school cooperation	27	73
d.	Other (SPECIFY)_____	15	85

REFER TO THE BOTTOM OF P.2. AND BOTTOM OF P.4. TO DETERMINE NET GAIN OR LOSS DUE TO OPEN ENROLLMENT

D-7a. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH A NET GAIN IN STUDENTS]** Has the increase in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO
a.	Built a new school	5%	95%
b.	Hired more teachers (Number_____)	5	95
c.	Hired other staff	10	90
	(SPECIFY)_____		
d.	Added academic courses	0	100
	(SPECIFY)_____		
e.	Added any extracurricular activities	0	100
	(SPECIFY)_____		
f.	Added any student support services	5	95
	(SPECIFY)_____		
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	5	95
	(SPECIFY)_____		
	_____		
	_____		

D-7b. **[ASK ONLY THOSE DISTRICTS WITH NET LOSS IN STUDENTS]** Has the decrease in students in your district due to Open Enrollment allowed/caused your district to take any of the following actions?

		YES	NO
a.	Closed a school	0%	100%
b.	Laid-off teachers	15	85
c.	Laid-off other staff (Number_____)	15	85
	(SPECIFY)_____		
d.	Canceled any courses	0	100
	(SPECIFY)_____		
e.	Canceled any extracurricular activities	0	100
	(SPECIFY)_____		
f.	Canceled any student support services	0	100
	(SPECIFY)_____		
g.	Anything else other than what I have mentioned?	8	92
	(SPECIFY)_____		
	_____		
	_____		

D-8. People wonder whether parental and student choice options such as Minnesota's Open Enrollment program, the Postsecondary Education Options program, and the High School Graduation Incentives program will have impacts on educational quality and equality among school districts. I'm going to mention some indicators that are often used by districts to compare their current performance with previous years. First, I would like you to tell me if your district has noticed any change in the indicator in recent years. Then I'll ask you about the direction and magnitude of the change. Finally, I'd like you to consider whether some or all of the change can be attributed to any of the choice options implemented by the state or whether the cause lies elsewhere.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
INDICATOR	WHAT WAS THE DIRECTION OF THE CHANGE:	(IF CHANGE) PLEASE GIVE EVIDENCE OF THIS CHANGE:	TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THIS CHANGE:
a1. Student-teacher ratio in elementary schools	No Change..15% Higher..35 Lower...35 n/s..... 6 DK..... 9	Ratio in 1988-1989:_____ Ratio in 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....13% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____87
2. Student-teacher ratio in secondary schools	No Change..15% Higher..50 Lower...23 n/s..... 9 DK..... 6	Ratio in 1988-1989: _____ Ratio in 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment..... 8% PSEO..... 0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____92
b. Return of dropouts to school	No Change..62% More....12 Fewer... 3 n/s.....12 DK..... 9	% of dropouts returning: school years 1988-89 _____ 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
c. Advanced Placement Classes	No Change..56% More....24 Fewer....9 n/s.....12	Classes in school years 1988-89 _____ 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....10 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____90

d. Higher level math and science courses	No Change..44% More....38 Fewer....6 n/s.....12	Courses in school years 1988-89 _____ 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
e. Magnet or specialty programs (SPECIFY NAMES) (1)_____ _____ (2)_____ _____	No Change..62% More....29 Fewer....0 n/s..... 9	Programs in school years 1988-89 _____ 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....10 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____90
f. Number of student counselors	No Change..56% More....29 Fewer...15	Counselors in school years 1988-89 _____ 1991-92 _____	Open Enrollment.....13% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____87
g. High school Electives	No Change..18% More....56 Fewer...15 n/s.....12	Added or subtracted _____ courses since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100
h. Extra-curricular offerings (SPECIFY) (1)_____ _____ (2)_____ _____	No Change..47% More....35 Fewer...12 n/s..... 6	Added or subtracted _____ activities since school year 1988-89.	Open Enrollment.....0% PSEO.....0 HSGI.....0 OTHER_____100

D-9. And finally, are there any additional issues, strengths, or drawbacks of the Minnesota Open Enrollment policy that you would like to discuss?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO SAMPLED DISTRICTS ABOUT DATA ITEMS REQUIRING ADVANCE PREPARATION

POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES, INC.
1718 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N. W. • SUITE 400 • WASHINGTON, D. C. 20009 • (202) 939-5780

October 2, 1992

Dear _____:

You should have recently received a letter from Minnesota's Commissioner of Education encouraging you to cooperate with a study that we are currently conducting on Minnesota's Open Enrollment Option. This data collection effort follows up on a survey of Minnesota school districts conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education in school year 1989-90. This time, rather than surveying all districts in the state, we are conducting telephone interviews with three targeted groups: (1) districts that have experienced significant enrollment gains (defined as 50 or more students entering or a 5 percent increase in total enrollment) in school year 1990-91 due to Open Enrollment; (2) districts that have experienced significant enrollment losses (using the same definitions); and (3) a comparison group of districts where enrollment has remained relatively stable. The purpose of these surveys is to document the various kinds of impacts of Open Enrollment on Minnesota school districts. Using a data base supplied by MDE, your district has been identified as part of the sample.

A member of the study team will be calling you within the next month to schedule a telephone interview at a time convenient for you. While most of the questions in the telephone interview can be answered without advance preparation, there are some that might require you to look into your files. For this reason, we are sending you a list of these items in advance. Based on pre-test interviews with a few districts, we estimate that it will take approximately 45 minutes for someone to retrieve this information. Please note that the head counts requested in items (1) and (2) on the attached list refer only to students who attend or have left your district's through the **Open Enrollment** legislation and should not include students who have used other choice options available in Minnesota such as interdistrict agreements. Other information, such as that about district revenues, is of a more general nature.

If you have the pre-requested information available when the scheduled telephone interview takes place, we would be happy to record the data at our end. Alternatively, you can record the data on the attachment and fax or mail it to us. Our fax number is (202) 939-5732.

Thank you very much for your time. While your participation is voluntary, we hope you will be willing to provide us with this information. We look forward to talking with you soon. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to telephone me or Nancy Adelman, the project director. Collect calls will be accepted.

Sincerely,

Janie E. Funkhouser
Research Associate

Enclosure a/s

JEF/nct

Data Items Requiring Advance Preparation

(1) We are interested in verifying the Minnesota Department of Education's data base on numbers of students entering and leaving districts exclusively through the Open Enrollment option during school years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92. For 1991-92, we would like the figures broken out by race/ethnicity. We hope that total numbers provided for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are cumulative and include students who first entered under Open Enrollment in a previous year and have reapplied. (If your district was selected on the basis of low impact, most numbers requested may be zero.)

1989-90 Total entering _____ Leaving _____

1990-91 Total entering _____ Leaving _____

1991-92 Total entering _____ :

	NUMBER
American Indian or Alaskan Native	_____
Asian or Pacific Islander	_____
Black, not of Hispanic origin	_____
Hispanic, regardless of race	_____
White, not of Hispanic origin	_____

1991-92 Total leaving _____ :

	NUMBER
American Indian or Alaskan Native	_____
Asian or Pacific Islander	_____
Black, not of Hispanic origin	_____
Hispanic, regardless of race	_____
White, not of Hispanic origin	_____

(2) For districts where no students enrolled under Open Enrollment during 1991-92, we are interested in determining whether this means that no applications to transfer under Open Enrollment were received.

Number accepted and enrolled:	1989-90	_____
	1990-91	_____
Number accepted but never enrolled:	1989-90	_____
	1990-91	_____
	1991-92	_____
Number rejected:	1989-90	_____
	1990-91	_____
	1991-92	_____
Other (specify):	1989-90	_____
	1990-91	_____
	1991-92	_____

(3) Number of students (total, and minority) entering the district under Open Enrollment in 1991-92 eligible for services under the following federal categorical grants/entitlements:

	TOTAL	MINORITY
Chapter 1/Compensatory Education	_____	_____
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	_____	_____
Free or reduced price lunch	_____	_____
Bilingual Education	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

(4) Provide exact figures for the following budget lines for the 1989-90 and 1991-92 school years.

Revenues	1989-90	1991-92
Total Budget (operating)	_____	_____
Special Education Funds	_____	_____
Transportation Funds	_____	_____
General Education Foundation Aids	_____	_____
Capital Expenditures	_____	_____

(5) In the telephone interview, we will ask you to talk about certain indicators of change in your district and whether these changes are, in your opinion, related to educational choice options available in Minnesota. This particular item goes beyond the Open Enrollment option to include the Postsecondary Education Option and the High School Graduation Incentives option. Specific indicators that we will ask about include the following:

- Student-teacher ratio:

  Student/teacher ratio in elementary schools in 1988-89: ____
  Student/teacher ratio in elementary schools in 1991-92: ____

  Student/teacher ratio in secondary schools in 1988-89: ____
  Student/teacher ratio in secondary schools in 1991-92: ____

- Percent of dropouts returning to school:

  % of dropouts returning to school in 1988-89 _____
  % of dropouts returning to school in 1991-92 _____

- Advanced placement courses offered:

  Number offered in 1988-89 _____
  Number offered in 1991-92 _____

- Higher level math and science courses (i.e., calculus, chemistry, physics) offered:

  Number offered in 1988-89 _____
  Number offered in 1991-92 _____

- Magnet and specialty programs offered:

  Number offered in 1988-89 _____
  Number offered in 1991-92 _____

  Names of new programs: _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Number of student counselors:

  Number in 1988-89 _____
  Number in 1991-92 _____

- CHANGE in number of extracurricular offerings:

  Increase/decrease (circle one) in number offered since 1988-89 _____

- CHANGE in number of high school electives offered:

  Increase/decrease (circle one) in number of electives offered since 1988-89 _____